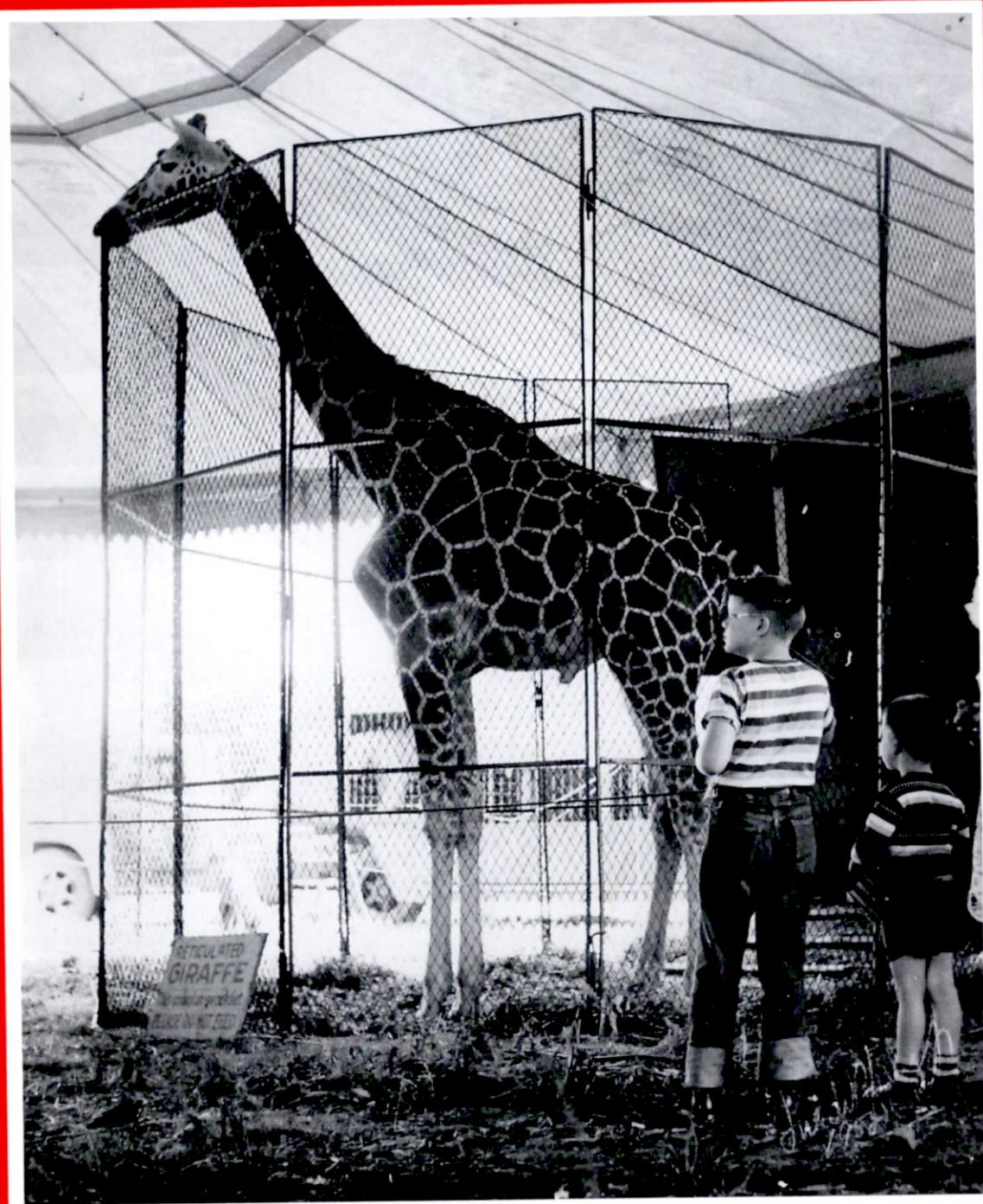


BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

JULY-AUGUST 1997



Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF
THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 41, No. 4

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The photo on the cover pictures Tony Diano's giraffe in the Cristiani Bros. Circus menagerie in 1958.

The two boys are Fred D. Pfening III, age eight, and his younger brother Timothy, age four.

The photo was taken by Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

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CORRECTION

Two photographs in the May-June *Bandwagon* were misidentified. The Barnes winter quarters on page 17 and the photo of Tusko on page 22 were taken in Culver City, California and not in Venice.

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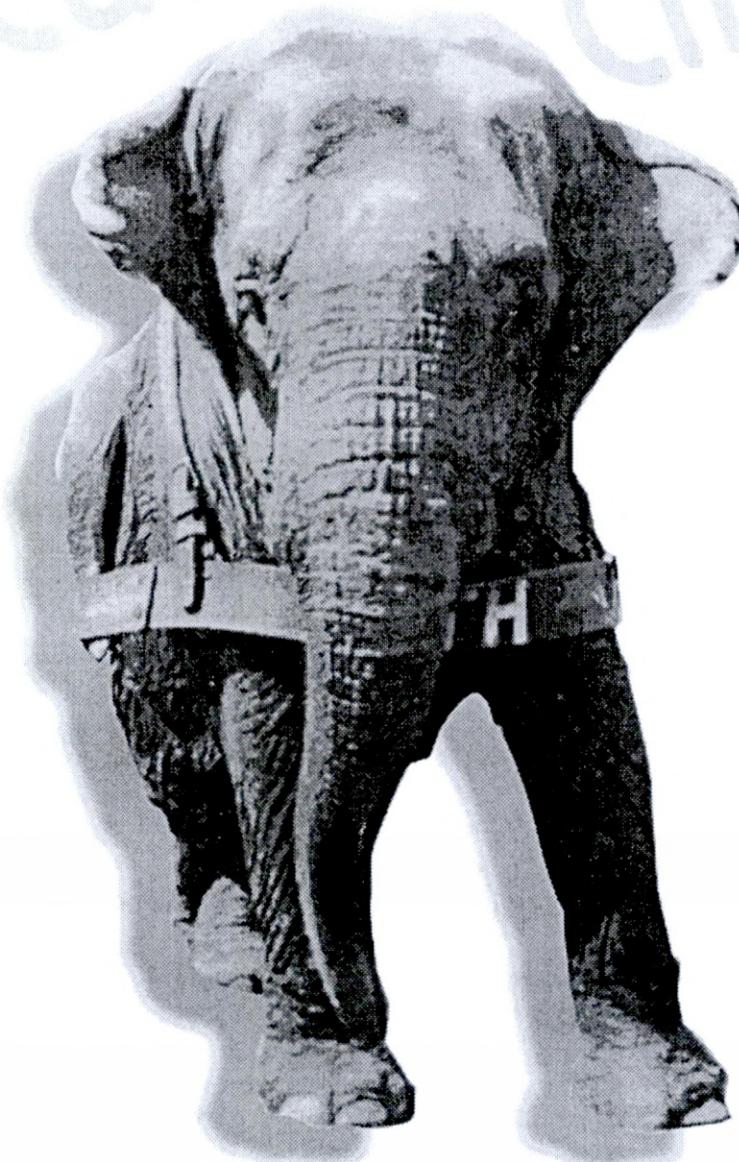
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by Marilyn Coppernoll

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The Adventures of JAMES M. NIXON Forgotten Impresario

PART ONE

By William L. Sicut

This paper was presented at the 1996 Circus Historical Society convention in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

James M. Nixon (1820-1899) was a showman of the nineteenth century mold, with a career that was comparable in length to many of the great proprietors of that period—John F. Robinson S. P. Stickney, George F. Bailey, Adam Forepaugh, etc. Under the influence of the indomitable P. T. Barnum (and what showman was not at that time), he used innovative tactics, issued what was described as "flaming, regardless of expense advertisements," engaged much of the finest talent available, and spread his managerial interests into several niches of public amusement. Odell referred to him at various times as "elegant," a "power," and "a wielder of big interests."

Press agent Charles H. Day once wrote of him, "Jim Nixon could furnish reminiscences enough of his own career to fill a volume and a right interesting one it would be, too." Yet, when he died in 1899, his obituary in the *New York Clipper* was not only inaccurate but inexcusably remiss in truly representing his accomplishments.¹ The flaming torch of James M. Nixon had tapered to a dark and smokeless wick.

Nixon worked his way from a mere groom with Aaron Turner's circus around 1836 to performing with various troupes in the 1840's and 1850's as acrobat, ringmaster and equestrian director. Although references to his early career are sketchy, we are able to follow a trail of professional activity (thanks to the persistent research efforts of Stuart Thayer²) that will eventually lead us to the more fertile years of circus chronicling.

Thayer tells us that from a Turner stable groom Nixon graduated to

other menial tasks with the show-lamp trimmer, ring builder, and ultimately performer. How long he was with this circus is not known, since Turner did not habitually list the names of his company in the advertising. After leaving Turner, his whereabouts are a mystery until John Glenroy's reference to him on Welch & Mann's roster in the spring of 1843.³ At that time, managers Welch and Mann divided their forces into two units. Rufus Welch took one and set sail in May on the brig *Francis Amy* for Mediterranean ports; Col. Alvah Mann opened at New York's Bowery Amphitheatre with the other in June. It is with the latter that Nixon performed as a \$6.75-a-week acrobat. The circus left the Bowery quarters on July 6 and moved to Brooklyn's Military Gardens for a week's stand. Here a deal was made for L. B. Lent and William A. Delavan to assume the management and take the company to Boston for five weeks; at the end of which, the circus returned to the Bowery Amphitheatre now under the proprietorship of John Tryon. At this point, Nixon replaced John Shay as ringmaster.

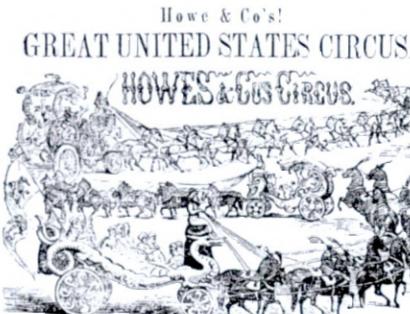
Uncle John Tryon (1800-1876) was a native New Yorker who began professional life as a reporter for the *Herald*. Having at one point conducted a job printing office, he is credited with composing the first illustrated show bill in this country, a single sheet with figures printed in black ink. He

became a leading writer of copy for bills and other advertising; and, as a circus manager, his career extended over more than twenty-five years. He was a man of superior ability, an intelligent and scholarly individual, highly thought of by his colleagues and the general public.

We know that Tryon's managerial name was connected with the Bowery Amphitheatre from 1843 through 1848. We also know that Nixon was equestrian director for him in the winter of 1845. It may be that he was with Tryon in 1844 as well. Then, some time in the winter of 1845, Dr. G. R. Spalding put a show into the Bowery and Nixon remained as equestrian director.

Shortly before this, however, Nixon married his first wife, Caroline, the sister of circus rider and manager Charles Bacon. He also took two apprentices under wing, William Armstrong and George Ross both of whom adopted the Nixon name (Ross

Nixon was equestrian director of the Howes & Co. Great United States Circus in 1848. Pfening Archives.



Embracing by far the largest Troop ever organized in the World, consisting of 250 Men and Boys, and requiring 40 carriages to convey the performers. Major Stevens, a company member of the Circus, is the art and commanding self-mistress of the service. Ache people are necessary in detail. The performance which is dying leaps and double somersaults, among other surprising feats, they leap over horses, through huts, over stones, and over a bridge, and, in a word, springing from solid stone, barrel, will discharge blankets, seize daggers and pick up various other objects while in aerial REVOLUTION. Also, the most surprising and difficult performances, evincing the strength of the Arab, and, on a scaffold, a weight of over eleven hundred pounds, and numerous other surprising feats, which, from the novelty of all descriptions.

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would later perform under his own name). This engagement with Spalding marked the first appearance of seven year old apprentice William as a featured equestrian.

The 1845 summer season found the Nixons with John T. Potter's Great Western Circus which toured at least in New York state and Michigan. Nixon served as equestrian director; Mrs. Nixon was listed as a rider. The apprentice tads were most likely there as well, although no mention was forthcoming.

At summer's end the Nixons returned to the Bowery Amphitheatre, but left on January 28, 1846, to join Howes & Co.'s Mammoth New York Circus at Palmo's Theatre, beginning a relationship, like the one with Tryon that was to last for the next few years. They were out with Howes' summer tour that season, and again in 1847, when James was equestrian director. W. H. Kemp, an English clown, who later became Nixon's partner in a circus, was also engaged. The show went from Newark, New Jersey, on April 26 to stands in Pennsylvania, New York state, Michigan, and Ohio. It closed in Cumberland, Maryland, October 7.

This pattern continued during 1848. Nixon, with his "talented children," as Odell phrased it, was again with Tryon's indoor show; then, in the spring of that year, the Nixon "family" and Kemp went out once more with the eastern unit of Howes & Co. The season began with a two week stand in Brooklyn and continued into New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York state, Ohio, and Kentucky until the end of October.

In 1848 a New Broadway Circus opened in an arena near Spring Street under the proprietorship of Tryon and Corporal Thompson on grounds which had been used for years by circuses and other itinerant showmen because of the proximity to Niblo's Garden. A large and airy pavilion was erected, with circular galleries forming a spacious and comfortable auditorium and with a narrow entryway situated between Broadway and Niblo's saloon, the whole of which was given the title of "Alhambra." James Nixon was a member of this company and, according to Odell, served as an "elegant" ringmaster. The Alhambra opened in October and, as Tom Pickett put it, "flickered for a brief season and then ignominiously departed."⁴ The circus having fled, the Alhambra was converted into the

TURN OUT
For the Forty Horse Team driven by one man
THE CALLIOPE WILL BE IN LYONS
On Saturday, June 20th!

NIXON & KEMP'S
Great Eastern Circus!
Representing the Amusements of
FIVE DIFFERENT NATIONS!
AMERICA, ENGLAND, FRANCE, CHINA, ARABIA,
Will exhibit at
LYONS, SATURDAY 20th.
The Great Performing Pavilion is the
largest ever made.
THE CALLIOPE,
A stupendous and harmonious instrument, playing with
steam pipes, the only one now on exhibition, and equal
in power to a brass band composed of more than a thousand
Musicians.

Newspaper advertisement used by Nixon & Kemp in 1857. Circus World Museum collection.

galleries of the International Art Union.

A daughter, Adelaide, was born in New York City this year. She was to make her first appearance on stage as a vocalist at Butler's Music Hall, 444 Broadway, New York City, in 1864. Sickness caused her to take leave from entertaining for a while; but when she resumed her professional activity she appeared in New Orleans at the Academy of Music for Spalding, Rogers & Bidwell's company; and the winter of 1865-66 in Havana, Cuba, at Chiarini's circus. While there she received instructions as an equestrienne and before leaving the eight month engagement could ride a principal act. For the 1848 summer season, the

Nixons were connected with the western unit of Howes & Co.'s Great United States Circus, Nixon again serving as equestrian director. Kemp, like an unshakable shadow, was with the company as well. After opening in Brooklyn on March 27 with a combined roster of both units, the route took the show through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York state, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and back to Pennsylvania for an October 27 closing. At winter quarters in Pittsburgh the outfit was sold to John P. Crane on November 22.

Nixon began his climb into the managerial saddle in 1949. The show which Howes had sold to Crane was renamed Crane & Co.'s Great Oriental Circus and went out the following season with Nixon as its manager. The "Oriental" in the title, Thayer tells us, referred to the dragon chariot drawn by a team of ten camels. The advertisements inform us that "The establishment on entering town will be preceded by the Monster Dragon Chariot, drawn by Ten Camels Of the Syrian breed, lately imported from the Deserts of Arabia for Crane & Company." It was further announced that 40 carriages were required to convey the performers and musicians from town to town. There was also a Fairy Chariot drawn by 12 diminutive ponies, none over 36 inches in height, driven by Master William Nixon. James Nixon was prominent on the program, assisted by two pupils, George and Albert. Madame Camilla Gardner was the star equestrienne, with her riding clowned by W. H. Kemp; Dan Gardner was the comic singing clown; Louis J. Lipman the scenic rider; William Smith, the two-horse rider; Samuel Lee, featured juggler and performer of cannon ball feats. The Wells family was also aboard, with Miss Louisa Wells as the artistic *danseuse*. The closing number of the show was a set of miniature hippodrome races, put on entirely with ponies and juvenile equestrians, a sort of burlesque sporting scene entitled "The Pony Races."⁵ Then, according to Odell, on December 3, Nixon and family joined the New Manhattan Circus, located in New York City on Grand Street at the East River near the Williamsburgh Ferry. The establishment, which had begun operations around the middle of November, did not last long, situated as it was "so near the seat of the old Mount Pitt Circus and of the recent Neighborhood Playhouse."⁶

The Nixon bunch joined the James M. June & Co. Circus (with S. B. Howes as a partner) for the 1850 season. The show opened in New York City on April 21, after which it undertook a lengthy tour through the eastern states, then Pennsylvania and Maryland, terminating in Baltimore on October 23, where it settled into winter quarters. William F. Wallett, the English clown, and the equestrian Tourniaire family were featured.

Kemp was there, too. The outdoor paraphernalia put to bed, James M. June & Co. moved into the Bowery Amphitheatre where it opened October 28 with much of the summer roster, including the Nixons, and remained past mid-April.

We lose a clear track of Nixon following this engagement. There were two units of June & Co. on the road for the summer of 1851, but there is no evidence that he was with either. He comes in view again on December 23, however, when he was advertised on the bill of Welch's National Circus, Philadelphia. In the summer season of 1852, we find him still with Welch, performing the duties of equestrian director for one of the two units the General put out, Welch's National Circus and Histrionic Arena. The show, managed by George Russell, opened in Philadelphia in March before touring in New York state, Pennsylvania, and New England. William F. Wallett was principal clown; Levi J. North, principal rider.

North also worked Tammany, his performing horse. Caroline Nixon was listed as working a pony act of some kind. Other Nixon names on the roster were Albert, George, and Jean. Whatever happened to William? Thayer has listed him with J. M. June & Co., suggesting that his apprenticeship had terminated at this time. A bill for Rufus Welch's 1853 winter circus, the National Circus and Theatre, which occupied the site of the Continental Hotel, Philadelphia, lists Nixon as equestrian manger.⁷

With the opening of Franconi's Hippodrome, Nixon appeared as its equestrian director. A syndicate had been formed in the winter of 1852-

53 by eight showmen including Avery Smith, Seth B. Howes, Richard Sands, and Lewis B. Titus. A lot was selected on the corner of Twenty-third Street and Broadway. A two-story, brick-walled, canvas-roofed structure was built, which housed a 700 foot track and 4,000 seats. With the idea of introducing Roman hippodrome games to the American public, the place opened on May 2, 1853. There were races of various kinds, two and five horse, the usual chariot,

show toured through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York state, then into Ontario, Canada, and down into Michigan, Ohio, and back into Pennsylvania and New Jersey, closing October 20.

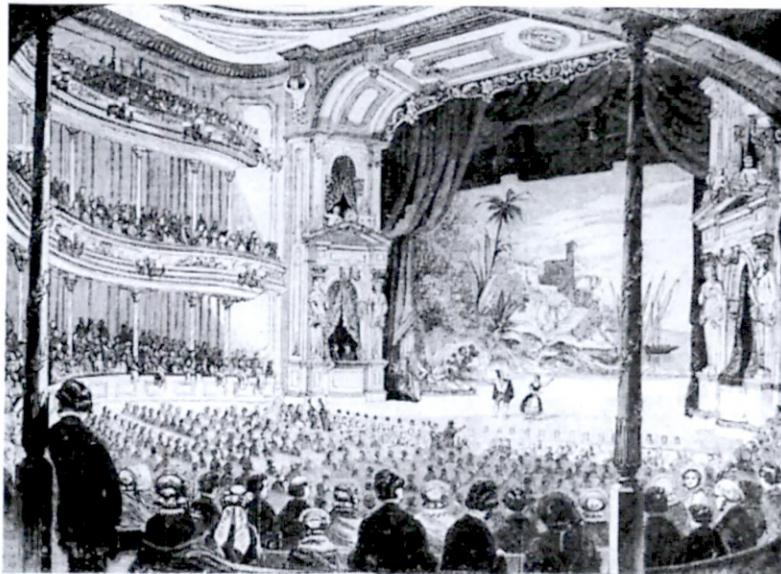
In February, 1856, Nixon and Myers were represented at the Old Broadway Theatre, where they furnished 24 horses for the equestrian drama *Herne the Hunter*. The relationship seems to have continued

into the summer season. Odell has Nixon with the Myers circus at Court and State Streets, Brooklyn, April 21-23. The company, which he labeled "a feeble array," included Myers as clown, the Siegrist Brothers, Louisa Wells, Nixon, and W. W. Nichols.⁹

The long association of James M. Nixon and William H. Kemp paid off when the two joined together in 1857 and put out a show under the title of Nixon & Kemp, which toured territory in Ohio,

Indiana, Illinois, and as far west as Iowa. The most memorable feature of the season was the introduction into circusdom of a steam calliope, a cumbersome instrument which Nixon had purchased from the Steam Music Company of Worcester, Massachusetts.¹⁰ Kemp was the featured clown and Horace Nichols the equestrian director. The show had an outdoor free attraction in Madame Louise, who walked a wire from the ground to the top of the tent; while, in concert, the calliope played outside during the ascension and then was taken into the tent where the musical machinery was displayed to a curious public.

The summer season over, Nixon went back to Tryon as equestrian director for the New National Circus, 84 Bowery, where Van Amburgh & Co.'s cages of wild animals and an equestrian troupe held forth, made up of such performing lights as Eaton and Den Stone, the Nicolo Family, Richard Hemmings, E. H. Perry, and the educated elephant Tippo Saib. In January it was announced that, for the first time in the United States, wild animals would be fed at the matinee of the 9th in full presence of the audience, the chef for the



Niblo's Garden Theatre in New York City. Museum of the City of New York.

as well as ostrich, camel and elephant, and ponies ridden by monkeys. There were aerial equilibriums, performed thirty feet from the ground, and pageantries such as *The Field of the Cloth of Gold* in which men dressed as knights engaged in mock battles.

Nixon was also equestrian director for the Castle Garden Circus in the fall of 1854. The place, managed by J. Vanderbilt, opened on October 23 and ran through November 25.⁸ Following, the Nixons, James, William, and George, wintered at the Philadelphia Theatre for Welch & Lent, according to T. Allston Brown. The place opened November 1, 1854, overlapping the season at Castle Garden, and closed with a benefit for Dan Rice on April 24. Then, what appears to be almost the entire Castle Garden roster went on the summer circuit of 1855 with Seth B. Howes' outfit--Howes, Myers & Madigan. The performing rosters of both included the Madigan family, James Myers, the Whitby's, the Nixons, Tom King, and Moses Lipman. Opening on April 23 in Patterson, the

occasion being Prof. Langworthy. A pupil of Langworthy's, May Livingston entered a den of animals for the first time on the 13th. *Cinderella* was produced on the 18th by a group of children under the supervision of Nixon. The place continued in operation, adding a variety of guest performers, through the 15th of March before the straw was swept away and the dramatic actors reappeared.

The following season, 1858, Nixon & Kemp went into Canada and then moved through the New England states and into the Middle West. They were billed as two shows with ads running side by side, one proclaiming the arrival of J. M. Nixon's Great American Circus and the other of Kemp's Mammoth English Circus. The double advertisement included the following: "PATICULAR NOTICE

"By an arrangement effected between the proprietors of Nixon's Great American Circus and Kemp's Mammoth English Circus, the two companies will perform together under one pavilion, giving all the performances advertised by each for one single price of admission, until further notice.

"It is also agreed that the companies will travel together under the title of the 'Great Anglo-American Exhibition,' that each company shall make a separate and independent procession into town, attended by their respective military bands; and that, in order to enable the two companies to give a full performance of everything announced in both bills, the gymnastic feats of each company will be given in one ring at the same time, the performers being distinguished by their several badges, as follows: the English wearing a red ribbon attached to the right shoulder, and the Americans a blue ribbon on their left shoulder."¹¹ The combined shows listed a highly respectable roster of performers. The Australian, James Melville, was riding his first season in this country. Others featured included the Lake Family, equestrian Omar Richardson, three Herculean performers--Libby, Paul, and Gregoire; five clowns--Kemp, William Lake, Signor Bliss, Robert Butler, and Amelia Butler (daughter of jester John Wells, purported to be the first female clown in America). The steam-sputting music department was enhanced by the acquisition of two bands under the leadership of Ned Kendall of Nixon's troupe and Peter Vost of Kemp's.

**AMUSEMENT
FOR
THE MILLION**

The most pleasing entertainments ever exhibited in the United States, will be given in the small Pavilions on the Ground of
NIXON & CO'S GREAT AMERICAN CIRCUS.

**LOOK AT THE NAMES OF THE
TALENTED ARTISTS**

Performing in this most novel exhibition—

Miss Carrie Wentworth,
The fascinating Danceress and charming Vocalist.

Miss Jenny St. Clair,
The celebrated Operatic singer.

Miss Victoria Howard,
The pleasing Danceress and Vocalist.

M'les Celeste, Agatha and Clara,

BILLY BLAIR,
The greatest Delinester of Negro character is in the United States.

GUS. SHAW,
The Great American Comic Vocalist and "Bruder Banz."

J. E. Adams,
The celebrated Buff Singer.

T. Williams,
The pleasing Bellringer.

Adolph Nickels,
Leader of the Orchestra.

Being the greatest number of "TALENTED PERFORMERS" that ever gave an entertainment under one canvas.



Male & Female Minstrels!
In which the whole company will appear in SONG, DANCE, CHORUSSES, MINSTRELY, &c.

Newspaper ad used by Nixon's Great American Circus in 1860. Circus World Museum collection.

At the finish of the summer season, Nixon & Kemp took over the Palace Gardens, Sixth Avenue and Fourteenth Street, New York City. The Lakes remained in the company and introduced at that time a new performer in the family, billed as Mlle. Emeline Loyalle, their four year old equestrienne daughter, Emma Louise Lake. Tony and William Pastor and Charles Bliss were also on the bill.

Following this engagement, the Nixon and Kemp management was dissolved; at which time Kemp left performing and returned to his former occupation as gold leaf manufacturer. Nixon & Co.'s Mammoth Circus, with James Melville taking over Kemp's half of the management, went to Boston for a stand that lasted from November 29 through January 8, 1859, before opening at New York's Niblo's Garden on January 27 with the famous clown, Dan Rice, and his trained animals as the big

attraction. The run ended around the middle of April, when the summer tour began through the eastern states and Canada, featuring Dan Castello as principal clown, along with Don Juan, his educated bull.¹²

On October 3, Nixon brought his tented troupe back to New York City and staked out at Broadway and Thirteenth Street for a week. The company paraded with their stud of horses and other paraphernalia behind the lead of their colossal band chariot drawn by a forty-horse hitch and driven by Madame Mason, a lady of vague biography but billed as "formerly of the London and Parisian circuses." Then, on the 10th, the show property was auctioned off. Now, free of pressing responsibilities, James Nixon, along with a Mr. Moore, the stage manager at Niblo's, went to Europe to engage artists for the approaching winter season. The recruiting trip would, within a matter of months, result in the high point of Nixon's managerial career.

January, 1860! Barely before New Year's Eve hangovers were be-stilled, came the announcement of the auspicious arrival to America of William Cooke and what was advertised as Cooke's Equestrian Troupe from Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, London, soon to perform at the famous Niblo's Garden, New York City. Cooke! Astley! What a joyous sound to those familiar names and what an exciting circus tradition they represented.

William Cooke (1802?-1886) was a third generation of the famous Cooke dynasty which began in Scotland with old Thomas Cooke in the 1750's.

Thomas' son, Thomas Taplin Cooke 1782-1866), a rope walker, rider and strong man, fathered somewhere between thirteen and nineteen children and still had time to establish his own circus in 1816 and operate continually until his fateful venture to America in 1836. That year he crossed the waters with a company comprised of thirty-seven of his own family, most of whom performed or assisted the performers. There were thirty or forty of the finest horses ever imported into the country--some full-blooded Arabians and a number of small Burmese ponies, the latter ridden by the infant prodigies of the Cooke clan. But on the morning of February 3, 1838, at the Front Street Circus in Baltimore, Maryland, a devastating conflagration left Cooke bereft of ring stock and circus paraphernalia and eventually sent him back to England, fi-

nancially depleted and emotionally embittered. After having introduced America to such spectacles as *Mazeppa* and *Alexander The Great's Entry Into Babylon* he continued to perform in them until his death at the age of eighty-four.

William, Thomas Taplin Cooke's second son, over-shadowed by his younger brother James' equestrian virtues, became a clown, rope walker and strong man. He formed his own circus company in 1834 and eventually gave up performing to direct equestrian dramas and training animals. He took over the management of Astley's Amphitheatre, London, in 1853 with assets of £50,000 and laboriously managed that famous arena until his seven-year lease and much of his wealth ran out in 1859. During the length of this tenancy he had been kept afloat by his touring tented attraction; so one can only speculate that, like others before him, he came to America to enlarge his depleted treasury.

The circus with Cooke's name opened on January 16, 1860, at Niblo's Garden and, as Odell put it, the company "took possession and startled the most blasé." The initial advertising read: "Cooke's Royal Amphitheatre, the extensive and brilliant equestrian troupe of Mr. William Cooke, late of Astley's Amphitheatre now performing at Niblo's Garden every evening and on Wednesday and Saturday afternoon commencing at 2:00. The matinees on Wednesdays and Saturdays are given for the accommodation of families residing at a distance and those who prefer attending in the daytime. This splendid equestrian troupe comprises all the great living artists in the profession and the entertainments are the most original, novel and refined ever witnessed in this country. Boxes 50¢, orchestra chairs \$1, private boxes \$5 and \$6."¹³

Niblo's Garden! This gracious old venue had its own colorful tradition. Originally the site of the old Bayard farm, located away out of town on Broadway, or what was generally known as the Albany Post Road, it became a drill ground for militia officers shortly after the War of 1812. Later, a celebrated breeder of race horses, Charles Henry Hall, secured the property and built for himself a two-storyed, slate-roofed mansion of solid brick, and for his prized quadrupeds a shingled palace of wood and glass, the sum of which rested

on grounds lined by an avenue of poplar trees, enlivened with decorative floribunda. Here, sometime shortly after 1823, William Niblo took memorable possession.

Niblo, "an active little man with keen, shrewd money-making eyes," was the industrious proprietor of the old Bank Coffee House, named after its neighbor, the bank administering to the financial wants of New Yorkers, located in the business quarter of downtown Gotham. There, for some years, Niblo successfully served up such gastronomic delights as turtle soup and salmon from Boston until, ambitious for greater glories, he transformed the old Bayard farm site into a summer garden spot, wherein ice creams and other delectables were served up. Amid a setting of latticed arbors, ornamented by gorgeous

Newspaper ad used by Cooke's Royal Circus in 1860. Circus World Museum collection.

PLEASE OBSERVE THE DAYS AND DATES!

COOKE'S ROYAL CIRCUS!

FROM NIBLO'S GARDEN, N. Y.,

AND

Old Grizzly Adams!

WITH HIS MONSTER BEAR MENAGERIE!

AND THE

EDUCATED BUFFALO!

At Salem, WEDNESDAY, Sept 5, to open at 2 and 7 P. M. Tickets 25 cents.

COOKE'S ROYAL CIRCUS:
Niblo's Garden, New York—Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, London; in combination with Old Grizzly Adams' CALIFORNIA MENAGERIE! Overwhelming Combination! Fresh in the Field! All Grand! All Novel! Cooke's Royal Circus! Old Grizzly Adams' Wonderful Grizzly Bear Garden!

JAMES M. NIXON & F. T. BARNUM

Out to the public with one stupendous Circus and Menagerie, embracing the talent of the Equestrian World, and the extraordinary feats and performances of the Old Trapper and Wild Beast subduer, California Adams, all under one tremendous Pavilion, capable of comfortably seating 5000 persons, and

ONLY 25 CENTS ADMISSION!

Niblo's Garden, New York—Astley's Amphitheatre, London—Barnum's Grand Zoological Pavilions—all deserted to furnish forth this immense travelling combination of

MORAL AND INSTRUCTIVE EXHIBITION:

THREE GREAT CLOWNS,
DAVENPORT, ARMSTRONG & KINCAIDE.

A Full Troupe of Equestrians and Gymnasts!

OVER 160 MEN, HORSES, AND PONIES.

FULL BRASS BAND!

Old Adams' California Menagerie!

P. T. BARNUM & CO., Proprietors,

In combination with

COOKE'S ROYAL CIRCUS!

illuminations, and within the sound of tireless musicians, devourers of such delicacies could lounge or stroll about the Edenic grounds on torpid summer evenings, interrupted merely by such novelties as balloon ascensions and pyrotechnic displays or periodic flights of tight-rope performers. At the outset, the gardens were located far up town, a milestone from City Hall, and beyond the service of the city stage lines. Undaunted, Niblo ingeniously created his own stage line, equipped with new and innovative vehicular design.

In 1828, as the resort had grown in popularity, the training stable was converted into a concert saloon, Theatre San Souci, wherein Madame Otto warbled *Meet Me by Moonlight Alone* and Gambati launched his solos on the French horn. Then, sadly, on the morning of July 18, 1846, the little theatre was destroyed by fire. But a house with such precious memories could not be easily consigned to ashes. The place was rebuilt in a manner that surpassed in elegance and utility the previous structure and opened for trade on July 30, 1849; after which, the theatre housed a continuous offering of high-class performers and performances.

And now, in January of 1860, Nixon re-established himself at Niblo's Garden, taking over the proprietorship in preparation for the arrival of Cooke and a talented company. The place was specially prepared for circus performances, the ring being covered with a thick Canton matting, a decided improvement for indoor arenas, being at once a sure and elastic footing for the horses and entirely free from the dust and annoyances of the old system of tanbark and sawdust. All of the costumes and properties were tastefully selected.

And, most importantly, thanks to James Nixon, the company was a combination of outstanding English and American performers. James Robinson, premier Boston-born bareback rider; was summoned home from his European tour. He had accompanied Howes & Cushing's Great American Circus to London in the spring of 1857 and throughout his stay established himself as a star performer in both England and on the Continent. The Hanlon Brothers, English gymnasts, were engaged.¹⁴ They had made their American debut at Niblo's in 1858 under Nixon's management. Joe Pentland, famous for his impromptu songs and portrayal of a drunken sailor on horse-

back, was the feature clown. Sallie Stickney, billed as Mlle. Heloise, performed her equestrienne act of leaping, cutting, pirouetting, and one-foot riding, showing a beauty in face and form which was to rank her at the top of her profession. There were also William Duverney, the "greatest dislocationist in existence;" Mons. F. DeBach, Parisian equestrian and juggler on horseback (and who had only recently performed at Metropolitan Garden, Second Avenue and Thirteenth Street); and a Mr. Charlton, billed as the "oldest of gymnasts."

Mlle. Heloise! Why Mlle. Heloise, you may ask? Well, the answer was forthcoming in a letter to the *Clipper* dated March 13, 1860, from her father, S. P. Stickney: "I noticed in the *Clipper* of March 10th that a correspondent asks the question why Miss Sallie Stickney should drop her own name and assume that of 'Heloise.' I will answer. When Miss Stickney arrived in New York this winter to fulfill an engagement at Niblo's, Mr. Nixon desired her to use her name 'Eloise,' the name she used when she appeared at the same house under Rufus Welch's management in the winter of 1851. Through an error on the part of the person who made out the bill, instead of 'Eloise,' her name was printed 'Heloise,' and it was not considered of sufficient importance to make the correction. Her real name is Sallie Eloise Stickney."¹⁵

The observer for the New York *Times* found the opening performance "in the highest degree satisfactory," an achievement which elicited abundant applause from one of the most crowded houses he had ever witnessed. He was impressed with the riding of the leading equestrians; for, as he expressed it, "in New York, as in every other city of the Union, good circus riding is thoroughly understood and appreciated."

He went on to state that "Mlle. Ella Zoyara, the principal lady of the company, is a very remarkable performer, and the graceful daring of her 'acts' brought down the heartiest applause of the house."

Thomas Hanlon's *l'echelle perleuse* was found to be stimulating and unique. After going through a sequence of gyrations on a swing attached to the ceiling at one end of the proscenium, the gymnast suddenly released himself from it and, flying some twenty or thirty feet through the air, grabbed onto a rope on the other side. "The feat is ter-

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 1861

NIIBLO'S GARDEN

James Mc Nixon
Managing Director
Stage Manager
Scenic Artist
Musical Director

Sole Lessees and Managers
M. T. Burch
M. T. Burch
G. Mandie
John Cooke

RETURN HOME OF
NIIXON'S ROYAL CIRCUS
After an absence of six months, making a tour through all
The Southern States and the Island of Cuba
And achieving the greatest success ever made by any
**EQUESTRIAN ESTABLISHMENT
ON THIS CONTINENT.**

Thursday Evening, March 28th, 1861
PROGRAMME:

1. CHINESE FESTIVAL—with Gymnastics by the Equestrians and Dances by the Ronzani Ballet Troupe—Galletti, Tophoff and Corps de Ballet	by	Mlle. Heloise
2. Equestrian Poses	by	T. Armstrong
3. Stilt Equilibrium	by	Company
4. Exercises in Tumbling	by the	Master Roberto
5. Sommersault Act of Horsemanship	by	W. Smith
6. L'echelle Perleuse	by	Kinsade and Sebastian
7. The Olympians	by	

INTERMISSION OF FIFTEEN MINUTES

8. Perch	by	King and Smith
9. Horsemanship Extraordinary	by	Sig. Sebastian
10. Leo Poses	by the	Laurence Brothers
11. La Trapeze	by the	Clara Brothers
12. Pierrotine Equitation	by	Ella Zoyara
13. Slack Rope	by	J. Ward
14. Concluding with the comic Piece	by	MONK AND MADAME DENNIE

TRICK CLAWN: SIGNOR FELIX CARLO
JESTER: JAMES WARD
RING MASTER: B. ELLSWORTH

Program of Nixon's Royal Circus in Niblo's Garden in 1861. Circus World Museum collection.

rible to behold, but beautifully performed."¹⁶

A representative for the New York *Clipper* was on hand for the opening as well; however, at first glance, he was not as impressed as his colleague from the *Times*. But, returning the following week, he found decided improvements which were passed off to the entire satisfaction of a numerous and highly respectable assemblage. It is with gratitude to him that we are able to disclose the evening's program.

As the curtain rose, a very attractive scene was at once presented to view, the entire troupe appearing on the stage in the various characters representing the exercises of a Chinese festival—a procession of lanterns, the feats of a troupe of acrobats, the tricks of several conjurers with knives, balls, plates, etc., and finally a series of ballet dances (the corps of dancers being somewhat meager), all this along with equestrian exercises in the ring. The closing part of this opening spectacle presented a very attractive *tout ensemble*, the very appropriate music

of the efficient orchestra being a marked feature to the piece. The next thing in order was an exhibition of the equestrian talents of Mlle. Heloise, termed an "act of beauty," which was judged an exceedingly graceful and beautiful performance. The comic act of Mr. Charlton on stilts was next on the program. The *Clipper* observer found the powers of equilibrium possessed by this artist, especially in the drunken scene, at once surprising and amusing to the extreme. This was followed by the exercises of a couple of diminutive ponies whose equine intellects had been cultivated by Mr. Cooke. A globe performance on horseback by Mons. DeBach followed that of the ponies. Next, considered by our man a great feature, was the "truly wonderful and perilous feats of agility and strength" exhibited by Thomas Hanlon on the aerial apparatus attached to the proscenium of the theatre. Then there were Japanese games by a troupe of acrobats which afforded an amusing relief to the previous act of peril. The first part of the program closed with Master Barclay's spirited exhibition of the dangers of English hurdle racing.

After a brief intermission, the audience was introduced to the act entitled *La Corde Volante* in which Mr. Ward went through some exercises on the slack rope, concluding with throwing himself groundward with a rope around his neck. Next came the equestrian feats of Mlle. Zoyara. The *Clipperite* described the performance in the following manner: "Her fine physique, which her ethereal costume fully exhibits, at once attracts the attention of the masculine gender. However, her really surprising performances draw forth repeated outbursts of applause and the occasional failures attendant upon her daring attempts, though it mars somewhat the beauty of the performance, considerably enhances the excitement, the whole series of feats being decidedly of the dangerous order."

Then came Duverney, the contortionist, "whose astonishing postures showed what a degree of elasticity the human body is capable of by early and constant training." The twin ponies were next brought forward and their behavior afforded additional testimony of Cooke's powers over animals. The succeeding feat was termed a novel and double act *par terre* by Thomas and George Hanlon, considered a beautiful and astonishing performance and something never before witnessed on this

side of the Atlantic. Their great muscular strength and their lithe and agile movements, together with the grace and ease with which they performed each exercise, marked the whole exhibition one of unequaled excellence and merit. The brothers were considered "the trump cards of the troupe." James Robinson, next appeared and went through a series of equestrian feats, prominent among which was his turning somersaults over flags while on horseback. In this, the *Clipper's* man believed him to be unequaled; still, his riding on the bare back of a horse was rated as inferior to that exhibited by the Australian Melville.

The entertainment concluded with the usual equestrian comedy. Joe Pentland's wit and humor and smartness at repartee "served materially to enhance the attractive character of the whole entertainment." Some members of the audience were scolded for leaving the theatre before the last piece was commenced. "This custom is a disgrace to all who are guilty of it," the *Clipper* readers were admonished, "evinces as it does the possession of gross selfishness and want of common decency of behavior."¹⁷

The lollipop of the evening, taking the spotlight and making a New York debut, was decidedly Mlle. Ella Zoyara, whom Nixon had enticed from England with the offer of \$500 a week, free passage for self and two servants, all medical bills, and use of a horse and carriage when required. The rider's beauty and grace upon the back of a horse at once aroused an impressive response of adulation from the Niblo patrons.

But within a few weeks the charade was challenged and the truth emerged. Ella Zoyara was in reality Omar Samuel Kingsley, a Creole from Louisiana. While a circus managed by Spencer Q. Stokes and Signor Louis Germani was playing in New Orleans, the boy was apprenticed to them by his parents at seven years of age. His Christian name is unknown but everyone called him "Sam" or "Little Sam." By the time he was eleven he showed amazing skills as a rider. Because of his physical beauty, Stokes dressed him in complete female attire, which was worn in and out of the ring. It has been stated that, once donning the clothing of a girl, he did not wear male britches again until he was nineteen. Caution was taken that his playmates were only girls his own age, developing in him the



Rider James Robinson performed for Nixon. Pfening Archives.

manners and grace of the female sex. Stokes' deception continued for eight years, the secret being sustained even to members of the companies in which Zoyara performed. In 1851, with Stokes as mentor, he sailed for England and a tour of the Continent, performing under the name of Ella and under the guise of a female rider. Story has it that while in Moscow a Russian count fell madly in love with him and men of nobility in the countries he visited flocked around him and bestowed unto him rich gifts. As described by a contemporary, he had "a faultless complexion of the fairest brunette type, his face never showing the slightest trace of a beard, and his features were perfect and of a most delicate, womanly character, as were also his hands and feet; his hair of raven blackness hung in luxuriant masses almost to his waist."¹⁸

The young man had created quite a stir before the question of his sex arose; then the stir became a storm. Once discovered, there was resentment by the press, unhappy as they were at being hoodwinked. "If the person is a man, the humbug is a very dishonest one; if a woman, for the sake of all parties, the point should be settled."¹⁹ It was conceded that Zoyara's novelty as a rider had lost its charm; and the public, particularly the male section, many of whom had sent the boy bouquets and tender notes and other expressions of adoration, were disillusioned. Before

the reality of his sex was established and while the question was yet in doubt, it was suggested that a committee of "strong-minded" women be selected to "wait upon" him and look into the facts of the case; but, understandably, Zoyara was not inclined to be examined. It mattered little, for in no time the truth was out and the whole secret exposed. "Humbug is the order of the day and he who is the cleverest at imposing upon his fellows is sure to draw the dollars," wrote an irate journalist.²⁰ "If this person is a boy as represented, then a most bare-faced imposition has been practiced upon the American public by the management of the concern and the sooner the public resent the fraud the better," wrote yet another.²¹

Poor Cooke. He was the titular proprietor and the recipient of some of the wrath, even though he had nothing to do with the deception. "Mr. Cooke is a stranger and we fear has put too much faith in Barnum's book," wrote a *Spirit of the Times* correspondent.²² But Nixon, seeing the publicity value at hand, included some of these quotations in his advertising, thus, in a manner, endorsing the truth of the fraud. "With the exposition of one deception, the patrons of such entertainments naturally begin to inquire whether the entire concern is not an imposition. It was announced as Cooke's company from Astley's Amphitheatre, London. We have been given to understand that such is not the fact—that with the exception of the Hanlon Brothers, Zoyara, and one or two others, the company is composed of Americans, many of them engaged in New York, Philadelphia and elsewhere throughout the country. . . . We have heard rumors of the deceptive character of Cooke's circus ever since their opening night; but, as we judged they might have emanated from those envious of their success, we gave little credit to such reports. But, however, a color of truth given to them by the management of the concern actually advertising the Zoyara exposition, we naturally came to the conclusion that where there is so much smoke there must be some fire. We therefore respectfully ask the cooperation of our friends to place the real facts before the public as to the character of the circus and those who compose the company. Any truthful evidence on the subject will be thankfully received and honestly made use of."²³

Stuart Thayer tells us that Nixon paid two round-trip passages from

England and back for William Cooke and his wife and a \$500 weekly salary. For this, Cooke worked two liberty acts and performed the duties of equestrian manager. The circus program had an array of European ring horses and ponies, including the highly trained war horse, Emperor; the Shetland pony, Robin Grey; twin ponies, Cupid and Diamond; and the elfin pony, Will o' the Wisp, billed as the smallest equine in existence. Were these Cooke's animals? And surely, given his background, he had a hand in the staging of the equestrian spectacles. But whatever his contributions to stage and ring, his most important asset was in supplying the use of the Cooke name, a name synonymous with circus and one carried by talented members of the Cooke clan working in America at this time. Nixon made full use of it in his publicity, presenting the circus at Niblo's Garden as Cooke's Royal Circus from Astley's, when indeed, as we are aware, it wasn't Cooke's company at all but a group of independent contractors. Later, when Nixon took to the road between Niblo engagements, he was inconsistent in the use of the troupe designation, billing at various places as Nixon's Equestrian Troupe or as Cooke's Royal Circus, even though Cooke had returned to England by this time.²⁴

Attendance had slackened somewhat from the crashing business at the beginning but the Zoyara controversy fanned public enthusiasm and shortly the circus was playing to large houses once again. "The circus 'draws like a horse' at Niblo's," it was observed, "and as the season is near its close, if you wish a seat lower than the ceiling, it is necessary to go early."²⁵ Charlton's stilt routine still drew wonderment as to how he was able to keep his equilibrium for such a length of time. Also, Duverney's act was holding up well. He had introduced the feat of resting his head on a platform while taking a complete walk around it without apparently moving it from its original position. An observer felt that the performer "must be all gristle." During the run, new features were added to the program—morris dances, May poles, jugglers, and steeple chases. The season ended with the ring performance of *The Field of the Cloth of Gold* on March 3. "The immense number of people who have for weeks past filled every available position, sitting or standing, has been astonishing, par-

ticularly that when we know that in all entertainments of this kind but little novelty can be produced. Unquestionably, taken all and all, this thoroughly complete circus is the best that has ever been seen in the United States."²⁶

James M. Nixon was a busy man throughout 1860. In addition to his involvement with the so-called Cooke circus troupe, and the soon to be installed California Menagerie, he was the house proprietor at Niblo's, where between circus visits he was still responsible for keeping the place going—booking burlesques, vaudevilles and comediettas, as well as operating the gardens with its rainbow of finely decorated flowers, spacious and magnificent arbors and botanical and aquaria exhibits. Also, it was at this time that Nixon had the great American actor, Edwin Forrest, under a one hundred night contract to perform in the principal cities of the country. But, the year still young, the industrious Nixon was not ready to retire just yet.

Spencer Q. Stokes brought Zoyara to America. Al Conover collection.

The so-called Cooke's Equestrian Troupe, terminated its run at Niblo's Garden on March 3, 1860, and moved to the Boston Academy of Music (formerly Boston Theatre). The troupe had drawn well and could have remained in place and enjoyed respectable business. Nevertheless, the horses and acrobats gave way to Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, who opened at the Garden of Niblo on March 5 in a new piece called *Patience and Perseverance*. It was a return engagement—the couple having performed there to crowded houses the previous October and November.

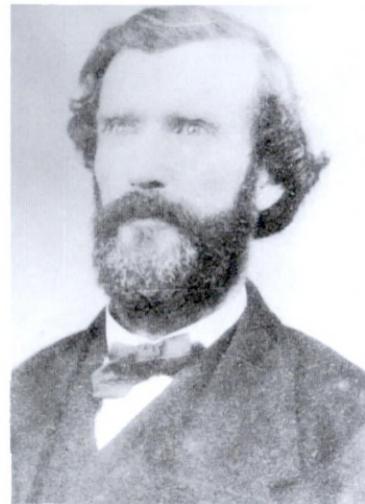
Cooke's Circus opened at the Boston theatre on the 5th of March to what was near a house record. Mlle. Zoyara, still being the attraction, caught bouquets tossed from the audience. But after the opening week the houses began to slack off, the Bostonians showing more restraint than their New York cousins. Also, the original levels of admission were found to be too "pricey" for the general public, so a reduction was soon

made. And, after all, only across the way the Morris Bros., Pell & Trowbridge Minstrels were offering a new burlesque with the alluring title of *Macbeth, or, the Downfall of Gilson's Beanery*. After five weeks in Boston, Nixon's circus took back Niblo's on April 9 with Ella Zoyara, James Robinson, the Hanlons, Joe Pentland and company—Cooke having departed—and began offering a series of spectacles. A new version of *The Bronze Horse* with musical and dramatic features and an equine ascension as a grand climax, was produced in April and extremely well received. There followed *Merry Sports of England* and *Blue Beard*, the latter being cleverly mounted and featuring the singing of Miss Marian McCarthy, who had joined Nixon's company in early May. The troupe was also enhanced at this time by a renowned Italian equestrian, Signor Sebastian Quaglieni, who performed Pickwickian impersonations on horseback. Although the houses continued to be well filled, the engagement terminated on May 26 with *Cinderella* a spectacle enacted almost entirely by children.²⁷

After leaving Niblo's Garden at the

end of May, Nixon's circus went on tour. There were short stays in Brooklyn, Newark, and Philadelphia, and then the company visited towns in Pennsylvania.²⁸ During this time the epithet of Old Grizzly Adams and his California Menagerie was added to the Nixon calendar, the result of Nixon entering into a joint arrangement with P. T. Barnum and J. C. Adams for exhibiting Adams' animals.

It was rumored in February that Barnum was negotiating for a share of old Grizzly Adams' California Menagerie, which was then en route from San Francisco. Actually, Barnum purchased a half-interest in it from a man who had preceded Adams' arrival. On hearing of this, the California menagerie owner claimed that the man had only advanced him money and had no right to sell a share of the exhibition; but he ultimately consented to the arrangement, figuring the experienced Barnum could more ably manage his



New York engagement.

James Capen "Grizzly" Adams, California hunter and trapper and exhibitor of wild beasts, was born in Medway, Massachusetts. When the gold rush fever struck, he migrated to California, ultimately moving into the mountains to live. At some point, he killed a female bear, then captured and trained her two cubs. He acquired other animals native of the region and began a menagerie collection. The bears were trained to walk on their hind legs, talk on cue, wrestle, etc. A nasty encounter with one in the Sierra Nevadas in 1855 resulted in his sustaining severe wounds to the head and neck, leaving an indentation in his skull the size of a silver dollar. Shortly after that incident, he moved out of the mountains and began exhibiting his collection, first in San Jose and then San Francisco. In 1856 he entered the circus business with Joseph Rowe until Rowe left with his troupe of performers for Hawaii. Before moving his menagerie east, Adams again had an encounter with one of his bears, which opened the injury on his skull, exposing a portion of his brain. Then upon leaving San Francisco on February 11, Adams and his cornucopia of animals endured a 100 day voyage before arriving in New York harbor. The 19 cages, most measuring 10' x 4' x 4', housed the pack of beasts during the arduous passage.

Barnum and Nixon erected a tent at Broadway and Thirteenth Street in which to house the menagerie; and on opening day, April 30, a blaring band paraded the animal cages down Broadway and up the Bowery with old Adams on a platform wagon in his hunting togs, mounted atop the largest of three grizzlies. Within the tent were displayed several wolves, a half-dozen different species of California bears, California lions, buffalo, elk, twenty or thirty large grizzly bears, and "Old Neptune," a sea lion from the Pacific Ocean;²⁹ all this and Adams' trained grizzlies demonstrating their agility and versatility through singing, climbing, dancing, vaulting, and somersaulting.

With horses and riders gone, the Niblo's Garden theatre underwent refurbishing for a summer reopening on June 4. Nixon's advertisements announced the arrival of such featured entertainers as the Nelson Sisters plump Polly Marshall and the Hanlon Broth-

ers. Niblo's Saloon was also opened for summer frivolities under the Nixon management.

The California Menagerie continued to exhibit at Broadway and Thirteenth Street until July 7. Then, after a doctor's suggestion that injuries would soon cause his death, and wishing to leave his wife with financial security, Grizzly Adams sold his share of the menagerie establishment to Barnum who then combined with James M. Nixon to take Cooke's Royal Circus with Old Grizzly Adams California Menagerie on tour. Adams struck a deal to go along for ten weeks at a total salary of \$500. After fulfilling most of the contract, he left and retired to his daughter's home in Neponset, Massachusetts where he died a short time later.

The dramatic season at Niblo's did not go well with the public and thus ended on June 28. The equestrian troupe, after completing their summer tour, what the *Spirit of the Times* called "one of the most successful campaigns to the principal towns, cities, and villages of the West ever achieved by a traveling company," moved back in on Monday, July 30th. Nixon's bills, labeled by the *Spirit* writer as "something 'stunning' in their lengthened sweetness long drawn out," heralded the arrival of Mlle. Zoyara, the Hanlon Brothers, James Robinson, Duverney, Charlton, DeBach, Quaglieni, and Pentland, with "forty auxiliaries, each of

Ella Zoyara, the cross-dressing rider, as pictured in the New York *Clipper*.



brilliant talent," all opening for a short season. The company was greeted with enthusiastic applause as each artist respectively appeared before the audience. "The performances were of the same varied, exciting, and excellent description as have already placed Mr. Nixon at the head of the managerial and equestrian profession."³⁰ What was called an historical pageant, "The Oriental Festival" was restored to the Niblo stage; also the equestrian spectacle, *The Field of the Cloth of Gold*, presented in tandem with *The Steeple-Chase; or Life in Merry England*, which was enhanced by the importation of six thoroughbred horses from the British Isles. The advertisement promised that all this would be produced in rapid succession, with original music composed by John Cooke (another Cooke?), leader of the orchestra. Although the arena action was impaired this time from lack of space, the ring being smaller than in the earlier stand, the houses were filled with "country cousins" and other summer visitors to the city. By the first of September, Nixon was including amateur gymnastic contests to the program in which "gentlemen" participated. This prompted an explanation in the advertising two days later: "The management having witnessed the gratification evinced by the citizens of and strangers to New York in the progression of physical education on the part of the students of healthy pastimes, their rising generation of the metropolis, has yielded to the request of many well-known citizens, and concluded to continue the exercises one week longer, permitting any amateur of respectability

to enter the lists, thus affording an opportunity for friendly emulation among the New York gymnasts; and allowing their fathers, mothers, sisters, and wives a fair chance to see their proficiency in active science."

Certainly the fathers, mothers, sisters, and wives of the amateur contestants would help swell the coffers of the circus treasury. But this was just filler until the run came to a close on Friday, September 14, and the stables vacated to make way for a two hundred night tenancy of the great Edwin Forrest, who opened his stay with *Hamlet* on the 17th. In anticipation, at 3:30 p.m. on the 12th, an auction was held in the theatre vestibule with the sale of orchestra chairs and private boxes for Forrest's opening night.³¹ Nixon was beginning to Barnumize.

The tour of the California Menagerie through the New England States began around August 4. Performing variously under the titles of Cooke's Royal Circus, Nixon & Adams, and Cooke & Adams, the show moved through Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire until the end of September. After which, Nixon sold the equipment to Boston showman George K. Goodwin and put out an outfit on rails under the name of Nixon's Royal Circus, which was routed through the southern states--Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama--and then opened a stand in New Orleans.³² It is assumed that the company utilized the local rail systems for a good portion of these travels.

The idea of transporting show equipment by rail was just beginning to catch hold. The decade of the 1850's was called the most dynamic period in the history of American railroads, as railroad building reflected the optimism, expansion, and prosperity of that era. By 1860 track mileage within the states east of the Mississippi totaled around 30,000. But full use of rail at this time was inhibited by a variance in gauge size from one rail line to another. Circuses moving on cars designed to operate on the standard gauge (4' 8" track width) had to unload and transfer equipment to cars compatible with, say, the southern gauge (5' track width), these two sizes being the most popular in use. Nevertheless, in 1853 Charles H. Castle and H. M. Whitbeck originated a circus out of Cincinnati designed to travel by steamboat, canal, and railroad. In 1856 Spalding & Rogers' New Railroad Circus went on the road with all appurtenances being carried by rail and specifically constructed so they could be used on any gauge size. And by 1859 there were several shows out whose title boldly implied "Railroad Circus."

Thayer's routing for Nixon's Royal Circus begins at the nation's capital, a direct line on standard gauge track from Philadelphia and Baltimore, and continues to Richmond, Norfolk, Petersburg, Weldon, Raleigh, Goldsboro, Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, Macon, Columbus, Montgomery, and finally New Orleans. Following Nixon's movement through the process of



Grizzly Adams and his trained bears. Pfening Archives.

full-blown speculation, the circus could have jumped to Richmond on standard gauge; taken standard and southern gauge, or boat travel, to Norfolk; then southern gauge to Petersburg. Weldon, North Carolina, a much smaller community, must have been a jump-breaker to Raleigh, both being on standard gauge. The same gauge could move the troupe to Goldsboro, intersecting with another standard gauge to Wilmington. From there the road to Charleston, South Carolina, was fitted with the southern gauge, which continued into Georgia for the Savannah, Macon and Columbus dates. We are now on the Georgia-Alabama border and must use a standard gauge to get to Montgomery, the end of the line before reaching New Orleans. Here we find ourselves in a quandary. We can either take a senseless, round-about rail route to the Crescent City or move directly south on a southern gauge rail to Pensacola, Florida, and thence by boat to New Orleans. The latter appears the most logical. In any case, primary rail travel was not only feasible for the Nixon's entourage but, by all accounts, preferable. Five days after leaving Montgomery, the circus opened on Saturday, November 19, at the St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans.

Nixon's Royal Circus remained at this stand for three weeks, closing on Friday, December 8. Two days later the show opened in Havana, Cuba, at the Villanueva Theatre for the winter season, the Hanlon Brothers and Ella Zoyara still the feature attractions. Back home the breezes of national anxiety were accelerating. Only ten more days would pass before South Carolina seceded from the union.

Elements of James M. Nixon's cir-

cus arrived in New York City from Havana on March 23, 1861, and opened at Niblo's Garden on the 28th where, in combination with the Ronzani ballet, the troupe filled out the remaining off nights until the end of the theatre season. Ella Zoyara and Mlle. Heloise were augmented by bareback rider Quaglieni; rider and leaper Tom King; rider and acrobat William Kincade; and other American performers whom the creative

Nixon presented under Spanish names. A repeated spectacle of *Cinderella* with a cast of seventy-five children was a companion attraction.

On April 27 Nixon took a well deserved benefit. The theatre closed its doors two days later, an occasion that ended Nixon's management of Niblo's Garden. War prevailing, this grand old house would remain dark for a period of eight months.

At the end of their engagement, the remaining contingent of Nixon's circus company left St. Jago de Cuba on March 24 on the *Black Squal*, H. W. King, Captain; Welch & Brothers, owners, to return to the mainland. Alas! after a stormy sixteen days, the ship was wrecked near Cape Hatteras, on April 19, 1861, with a total destruction to the vessel and cargo. Two performers, William Nixon, the adopted son of James M., and one of the crew were drowned. All horses except one and all property and wardrobe were lost. Nothing was covered by insurance.³³ And thus, sadly ends a chapter in the professional ledger of James M. Nixon.

NOTES

1. *Clipper*, September 30, 1899, p. 638: "James M. Nixon, an old time circus manager, died September 16 at the Putnam House, this city, aged seventy-nine years. Nearly a half a century ago he was among the best known of the circus managers, and claimed to be the first one to take an American circus abroad. He made a great deal of money but lost most of his fortune in endeavoring to fight P. T. Barnum. He retired about twenty years ago. He leaves two children."

2. We refer to notes submitted to the author, as well as the outstanding three-volume series, *Annals of the American Circus*.

3. John H. Glenroy *Ins and Outs of Circus Life*, p. 44.

4. Col. Tom Picton (edited by William L. Slout), *Old Gotham Theatricals*, pp. 25-26.

5. Charles Bernard, *Billboard*, December 31, 1932, pp. 64, 77.

6. George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, Vol. V, p. 578. 7. Reproduced in the *Clipper*, June 24, 1876, p. 100.

8. The roster included Mme. Marin, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Robert Ellingham, Misses Cline and Cook, Henry Madigan, Charles Davis, A. Sylvester, Harry Whitby, James Nixon, Fred Sylvester, William Lera, Tom King, Felix Carlo, James Myers, Hiram Day, Moses Lipman, Master Carlo, Charles and James Madigan, and George and William Nixon.

9. Odell, *op. cit.* VI, p. 510.

10. Thayer, *op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 114, from the correspondence of Fred Dahlinger, Jr. The Nixon & Kemp roster included William H. Kemp, clown and co-proprietor; James M. Nixon, co-proprietor; Charles W. Fuller, agent; Horace Nichols, equestrian director; Tom Linton, stilts; Bob Smith, clown; Chinese juggling troupe; Mons. DeBach, rider; Azi Cheriff, contortionist; Francois Siegrist, acrobat; Alonzo Hubbell, Herculean performer; Mlle. Louise, ascensionist; Mme. Kemp Mme. DeBach, Miss Rieford.

11. Richard E. Conover notes, Circus World Museum. Also, ads reproduced in the *Clipper*, June 24, 1876, p. 100.

12. Thayer, *op. cit.* Vol. III, p. 269, lists James Melville as co-proprietor. Others in the company included Charles W. Fuller, agent; Mme. Mason, teamstress of forty-horse hitch; Tom Lenton, clown; Louise Melville, rider; Mons. Paul, Herculean performer; Caroline Nixon, W. W. Nichols, rider; Fred Rentz, clown; Signor Bliss, clown. Mons. Gregoire joined later.

13. *New York Clipper*, March 31, 1860, p. 398.

14. *The Spirit of the Times* referred to six Hanlon brothers. They would have been Thomas (1836-1868), George (1840-1926), William (1842-1923), Alfred (1844-1886), Edward (1846-1931), and Frederick (b. 1848). Thayer suggests that only three were engaged. We know George and Thomas were there. William did not join at this time due to an injury but may have been added some months later.

15. *New York Clipper*, March 24, 1860, p. 390. The explanation came in a letter from Boston dated March 13. The 1851 engagement at Niblo's for manager Rufus Welch occurred from April 4th to the 26th under the guise of Cirque Francois. In the troupe with Mlle. Eloise were Mr. Lee, Mlle. Caroline Loyale, Francois Loisset, Eaton Stone etc.

16. *New York Times*, January 17, 1860, p. 5.

17. *New York Clipper*, January 28, 1860, p. 326.

18. Will S. Heck, "Chats With an Old Circus Man," *Billboard*, March 21, 1908, pp. 45, 48.

19. *Spirit of the Times*, February 11, 1860, p. 12.

20. *New York Clipper*, February 11, 1860, p. 342.

21. *New York Clipper*, February 4, 1860, p. 334.

22. *Spirit of the Times*, February 11, 1860, p. 12.

23. *New York Clipper*, February 4, 1860, p. 334.

24. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

25. *Spirit of the Times*, February 25, 1860, p. 36.

26. *Spirit of the Times*, March 3, 1860, p. 40.

27. Other members of the troupe included E. Rivers, John Foster, Nagel, Davenport, Ruggles, Robert Ellingham, Andrews, Cooke, Whitby, DeBach, Stickney, Mrs. Rynar, and Mrs. Nixon. William Hanlon was also scheduled to join his brothers but his appearance was delayed. He had been unable to perform because of an injury sustained some months earlier. Usually billed as Signor Sebastian, Quaglieni (d. 1882) performed in America for about 25 years and was considered excellent in somersault and carrying acts and as a bareback rider. Had just closed an engagement with Dockrill & Leon, Iron Amphitheatre, Havana when he was stricken with yellow fever and died. His son, Romeo Sebastian, was a circus rider.

28. The *New York Clipper*, September 1, 1860, p. 159, suggests that the show went as far west as St. Paul, Minnesota but Stuart Thayer told me that Orton & Older sometimes used the Cooke title in the West in 1860 and they were in St. Paul.

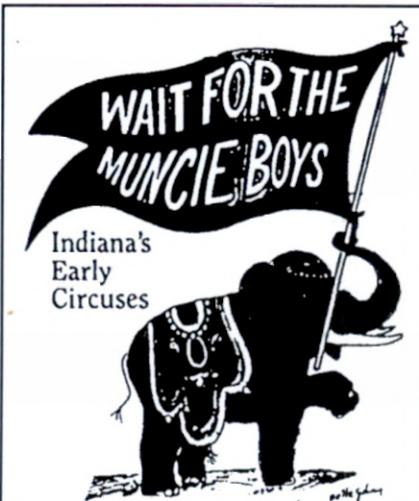
29. P. T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs; or Forty Years' Recollections*, pp. 530-38.

30. *Spirit of the Times*, August 11, 1860, p. 328.

31. *New York Times*, July 30-September 14.

32. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 116, 270. The roster included Levi J. North, rider; Herr Cline, rope dancer; Mons. DuBuch; Hazlett; Kincaide; A. Levy; William Naylor; Bob Smith, clown; Whitney & Burrows; Frank Whittaker; Masters Bogart, Coyle, G. North, H. North, Willie, Frank and John Whittaker; and the trick horse, Spot Beauty, and dancing horse, Tammy. The Whitby and Whittaker families departed toward the end of the season to perform at Carmac Woods, Philadelphia.

33. *New York Clipper*, May 11, 1861, p. 31. George Ross, equestrian, and Wessell T. B. Van Orden, advertiser, suffered broken legs from the falling of a boom, which forced them to stay behind when the company continued homeward. On their recovery they boarded the steamer *State of Georgia* at Fort Monroe and arrived in New York City on June 2.



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Ind. Residents, add 5%.

This article is based on my doctoral dissertation, Dan Rice's Aspirational Project: The Nineteenth-Century Circus Clown and Middle-Class Formation (Northwestern University, 1993), and on a talk given at the Circus Historical Society convention, Northbrook, Illinois, June 1997.

Dan Rice, nineteenth-century circus clown and circus owner, was, as Stuart Thayer notes in his masterful *Annals of the American Circus* (Vol. 3: 90), "without doubt the most famous performer in the history of the American circus." A talking (and singing) clown, Rice combined great skill with words and comedy to an acute sense of public mood. In the ring and beyond he addressed political and social issues in a way very different from the typical twentieth-century circus clown. Advertising himself as the Great American Humorist, he befriended Stephen Foster, feuded publicly with Horace Greeley, and affiliated politically with Stephen Douglas. Attracting large audiences city, town and country, North, South, and what was then the West, with his opinions sought and his words repeated, Rice was one of the most prominent people of his era in any field.

Understandably then, stories are told about Rice. But accuracy was not always their primary virtue. As with many circus tales, what got advertised and distributed in publicity, what got passed around, and what eventually found its way into the histories varies in reliability. Among the many extraordinary stories told about him, one of the most stirring is the tale--told here in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* a few months after the apparent event--of Dan Rice risking his life defending the Union as the country hurried toward war early in 1861: ". . . in New Orleans last winter. . . . There was an act of horsemanship in which the rider waved the 'Star-Spangled Banner' to the same glorious air by the orchestra. The first appearance of the flag, and the first few bars of the music, elicited a loud hiss by a stalwart individual . . . which was taken up until it swelled into a seeming universal chorus. . . . It was the night of the passage of the Ordinance of Secession, and the Union minor-

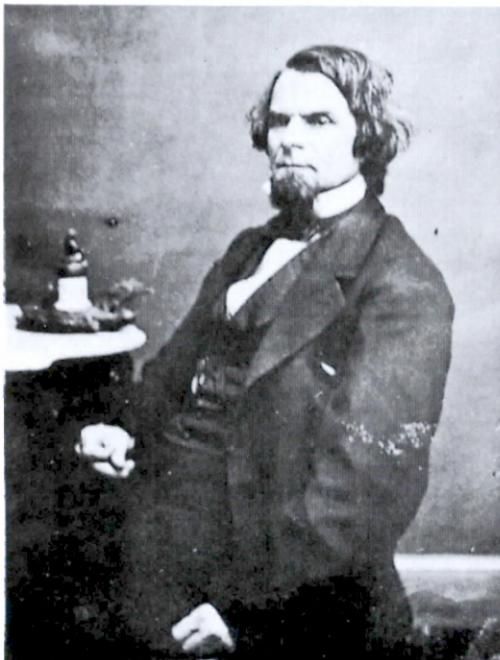
DAN RICE IN THE CIVIL WAR: UNION PATRIOT, SOUTHERN SYNP? OR DEMOCRAT CLOWN?

By David Carlyon

ity was crushed into silence by the fury and madness of the hour. There was one man, however, who did not flinch to defend the old flag and its thirty-four stars, one and inseparable. As he proceeded, a score of revolvers were leveled at him, but with the physical pluck which is part of his nature, and the moral courage derived from a good cause, he remained unflinching. . . . The American South, as well as North, admire pluck, and while the above manly conduct elicited a cheer for Dan Rice, the act was continued, the flag waved, and the *Star Spangled Banner* played by the orchestra. (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 8, 1861).

Stirring, the story is also fiction. It originated in a campaign to defend Rice's patriotism--and his popularity. Despite its inaccuracy, the tale is regularly retold in biographies and circus histories.¹ Though not the only fiction about Rice, it has become a

Dan Rice photo taken in the 1860s.
Hertzberg Circus collection.



literally defining one, as the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (1993, 2d ed.) labels him "U. S. circus clown, circus owner, and Union patriot." He was never a traitor, as his enemies howled, but he did express sympathy for the South while in New Orleans; then back in the North he attacked the "black Republican" war. As the war progressed, the clown needed to put himself right on the Union question, and a fundamental part of that effort was the grand fiction of patriotic bravery in New Orleans. This article will consider the events in New Orleans that winter along with the emergence of the core fiction; then discuss three other stories that emerged to support it--the title of "Colonel" Dan Rice, the claim that he inspired the Uncle Sam cartoon, and his reputed friendship with Abraham Lincoln; and conclude with reasons why the core fiction remained dominant.

Before proceeding, it must be emphasized that Dan Rice aspired to elevate his work to a highbrow status. In the late 1850s, even as he played clown and presented a circus, he omitted the words "clown" and "circus" from his advertising. He was instead the Great American Humorist in Dan Rice's Great Show, wearing the clothes of a middle-class gentleman in the ring and discussing political and social issues in performance. Eventually his aspirational aim would falter, circus would become lowbrow entertainment, and Rice would be re-imagined as the amorphous funster figure of "clown" that is mostly apolitical and mute, delighting children and possibly entertaining adults but no more. Using that model, writers have buried Rice's Southern sympathies by depicting as a surprise that a clown spoke on the war at all, an exception prompted by the shock of secession. However, contrary to twentieth-century notions, Rice's audiences expected politics and they got it.

Southern Sympathies in New Orleans, 1860-1861

Late in the fall of 1860, Rice took his circus down the Mississippi River, to Cairo and Paducah, to Memphis and Vicksburg. As talk of war increased, Dan Rice's Great Show descended the great river into Louisiana, to Wa-

ter Proof and Waterloo, Bayou Sara and Baton Rouge, and, in December, New Orleans. Long a great favorite in the South, Rice was returning to the Crescent City after five years' absence to play a two-month run at the Academy of Music, a theater holding 1,800 people.

He made his Southern sympathies clear immediately. In the advertisement for his opening night (*Daily Delta*, December 10, 1860), he of course promised the acts, mostly equestrian, typical of the mid-century circus, with "all the glories of the ONE-HORNED BLACK RHINOCEROS, 'THEM MULES,' EXCELSIOR, JR., THE BLIND STEED, The Great and Original [and cross-dressing] ELLA ZORAYA, and many other Startling Novelties, Splendid Spectacles, Games of Ancient and Modern Gymnasia." At the same time, Rice advertised what was in effect a political rally before that first performance, a procession through the streets of the Crescent City led by "gentlemen from Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama and Louisiana" to the statue of the revered Southern hero, Henry Clay. The roster of gentlemen omitted Northern states but did include South Carolina, a far distant state but a leader in belligerence, where ten days later a convention would vote unanimously to secede from the Union. Rice's advertisement further promised that his circus orchestra would play "The Marseillaise Hymn," a significant choice. It had been adopted as an anthem of defiance by secessionists (*Daily Delta*, December 9), with new lyrics depicting a noble South fighting a tyrannical North. Rechristened "The Southern Marseillaise," it had become "so identified with the Southern cause that it fell into general disfavor in the North."²

Rice's opening night speech, reported in the *Algerine Newsboy* (from Algiers, across the river from New Orleans), reiterated his sentiments: "The South has been aggrieved and she knows it, and the whole civilized world knows it; but none more seriously than those who have attempted to deprive her of her rights, those fanatical people who have violated those holy privileges of the ballot box by passing laws contrary to the Constitution. The folly of their ways they have already discovered, and that powerful comedy, good, sound, common sense, is already beginning to operate in

those States, the citizens of which, it appears, did forget the eleventh commandment, 'Mind your own business.'"

Though unavailable in the original, this version as reprinted in a 1901 biography is probably reliable as evidence of Rice's Southern sentiments because his niece and biographer, Maria Ward Brown, reprinted it in an attempt to prove his Union loyalty.³ She assumed, half century and a united country away from the turmoil of the war, that the "fanatical people" were secessionists but in these words Rice was attacking abolitionists, and warning them, not the South, to "mind your own business." The "rights" Rice sought to uphold were not those of the North but of the South, centrally including the "right" it asserted to own slaves.

Rice dressed to deliver his Great Union speech. Pfening Archives.

Rice continued to favor the South and to find favor there during his two-month run in New Orleans. He filled the Academy of Music "to its utmost" (*Daily Delta* December 11, 1860), playing to "overflowing" houses (13

December). The secessionist *Daily Delta* cheered that the noted clown had met a "flattering reception and been substantially rewarded," in the same issue that it condemned Northern sympathizers, what it called "Submissionists" (January 6, 1861). Secession sentiment was accelerating-on January 10, Louisiana troops seized the Federal arsenal at Baton Rouge--and still Rice spoke on issues in a way that pleased newspapers and audiences. The *Delta* used bad weather to establish the clown's position, aligning him with the most belligerent Southern state: "The day was drizzly, mean, and suicidal; the night dark, muddy and misanthropic [but] Dan Rice cares not for northeasters; in fact, for nor'westers. It is believed the facetious Daniel is a production of South Carolina, as that state is well known to produce capital Rice" (January 22, 1861). On January 24, when the *Delta* noted that Rice's "political speech-

es were spirited," praise was implicit.

Later in 1861, after he had left the city, other New Orleans newspapers presented the same picture of Rice's pro-Southern sentiments. In June, the *Crescent* commented on a speech in the North in which he said that Union volunteers were "going to annihilate treason, to subdue rebels," etc., etc. That was not the way Dan Rice talked when he was here last winter, but--never mind" (qtd. *Clipper*, June 1, 1861: 54). The *True Delta*--rival of the *Daily Delta*--was more direct.

"A CHAMELEON CLOWN--Dan Rice, who was famous here last winter for . . . his much talk in the ring about his intense Southernism and

hatred of the Northerners . . .

is cutting up all sorts of black republican capers. *There is a list in this city of Minute Men, signed by Dan and his company, to defend the South unto the death!* In fact, so exceedingly patriotic was he that a meeting was held on his boat, at which he made a flaming secession speech to his men" (May 26, 1861, qtd. *Clipper*, June 29, 1861, 87). There is no other evidence of the alleged military company, and of this mention of it is likely the exaggeration of a rumor.)

On January 26, 1861, New Orleans

reached fever pitch as Louisiana adopted its Ordinance of Secession. That night, the night of the famous fiction, Rice spoke from the ring as usual. His words were not reported, for as the *Daily Delta* had declared the month before, "were they not heard by a multitude such as precludes the necessity of repeating them?" (December 11, 1860). Nevertheless, whatever the clown said continued to please. The next day, under a headline cheering "THE LAST OF THE UNION IN LOUISIANA," the *Daily Delta* applauded Rice for "cover[ing] himself with a consummation of peculiar glory . . . as clown, philosopher, horse and mule trainer, humorist, Shakespearean reader, moralist, and politician and patriot of the combined Palmetto and Pelican school." Since the palmetto stood for bellicose South Carolina and the pelican symbolized newly seceded Louisiana, Rice was clearly identified with op-



position to the North. Whether or not he explicitly advocated secession, he sympathized with those who did. At his farewell appearance, his "audience was large, amiable, and appeared altogether satisfied with the performances." The *Daily Delta* did caution Rice to "beware of religious subjects of funny anecdote" but otherwise had no complaints (February 2, 1861). Content with his Southern sympathies, the Crescent City bid the great clown a fond farewell.

Republican Traitor? Democrat Patriot?

If the Civil War were as uncomplicated as it has descended in the popular imagination, a simple opposition of North-versus-South, then Rice's Southern sympathies might have caused him no trouble. His words in New Orleans fit the political debate of the time, when the country was still officially at peace. Then throughout the war, troup ing through the North, where he had been born and bred, and enjoyed as much popularity as in the South, Rice regularly proclaimed his loyalty to the Union. Rice's trouble arose not because he was a traitor but because he was a Northern Democrat, specifically a Peace Democrat. While declaring his loyalty to the Union, he joined many others complaining that an extremist minority of abolitionists had pushed an aggrieved South to secession. Some accepted his story of patriotic bravery, ignoring or not caring about his Southern sympathies, while others were so suspicious of the clown that they created their own damning fictions to add weight to their charges.

In May, 1861, four months after the clown left the Crescent City, after Rice peacefully played Natchez, Yazoo City and Cairo, Paducah and Nashville, and all the other municipalities that dotted his river route north and east, Horace Greeley's ardently abolitionist *New York Tribune* attacked. "A sharp lookout should be kept up for the detection of spies. Dan Rice . . . in New Orleans last winter, formed his company into a secession military organization under the name of Dan Rice's Zouaves. Lately coming northward this same man has tried to pass himself off as a Union man. . ." (May 13, 1861: 4). Rice was no spy and had no military organization (and he had generally been considered the winner in a public feud with that newspaper in 1858, providing a motive for *Tribune* animos-

ity) but the attack, accurate in its underlying suspicion of Southern sympathies, set off a series of charges and denials that played in the nation's papers through the war.

The Cincinnati *Daily Commercial* reprinted Greeley's accusation to counter it: "Dan . . . rides but one horse here, and that a *Union* one" (May 15, 1861). Then it printed Rice's denial of the "absurd" allegation and his claim that he had "reproved the man who hissed" the American flag (May 18, 1861). In June, the *Clipper* printed a letter from "Doctor," otherwise unnamed, vouching for Rice. After offering a brief version of the tale of Rice's patriotic bravery (with "Yankee Doodle" as the song hissed), the "Doctor" summarized: "The *Memphis Advocate* tried to believe the report about Rice having scared the Unionists, and put it in the paper under the head of 'More Sympathy in the North for Southern Rights.' They cut the lie out of the whole cloth; the Philosophers of the *Tribune* got ahold of it, and gave it the benefit of their circulation. Any slander that Greeley can obtain against Rice is 'old pie' for Horace (June 15, 1861: 71)."

"Doctor" was no neutral observer. The letter came from Wellsville, Ohio, dated May 30, and on May 27

Rice newspaper advertisement used in 1861. Pfening Archives.

DAN RICE'S GREAT SHOW AND HORSE EXHIBITION.

DAN RICE'S GREAT SHOW AND WONDERFUL HORSE EXHIBITION



WILL EXHIBIT AT LITTLE ROCK

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, March 15th and 16th

CORNER LOUISIANA AND THIRTEENTH STREETS.

The following is a list of some of these beautiful and ingenious Horses.

Rice's circus had played Wheeling, three days up the Ohio River, so the Doctor seems likely to have been an agent of Rice's, perhaps "Doctor" James L. Thayer, a clown with his troupe.

When Rice remarried late in 1861, the *Clipper* took the occasion to discuss his politics. "Dan Rice is trying to set himself right on the Union question, about which people had some doubt last spring. His first, and most sensible step, was entering into a union with Miss Charlotte Rebecca McConnell." But "Dan's step no. 2 is, making what he wishes to have believed as union speeches, made up principally of denunciations of abolitionists, a set of men, in the extreme sense, that are so in the minority, that they can hardly be said to exist. Dan is shrewd enough to know this, and feels that he will make but few enemies on that side of the house; while by thus knuckling to the South, by playing one of their cards, he hopes to make and retain friends among them, so that he can show a 'clean bill' with them when the war is over. That sort of Union, *alias* peace, *alias* 'secesh' doctrine, won't stand" (November 23, 1861: 255).

No Southern spy, Rice was just as clearly not the Union patriot of later legend. According to the Erie, Pennsylvania *Dispatch* of October 5, 1861, Rice warned of "strict partisans, . . . your rabid abolitionists," and excused secessionists for believing that "the Republican party of the North were abolitionists and composed of men who did not respect the Constitution or the laws—men whose sole object was the total extinction of slavery whether or no." The same day the Erie, Pennsylvania *Observer* reported Rice's "severe hits at the Abolition folly of the day," with its declaration "that if anything causes us to lose the loyal Slave States, it will be the growing conviction created by the efforts of fanatics in the North, that the war was one for the extermination of slavery."⁴ In December, the Cincinnati *Daily Enquirer* approved that "Dn spurns the idea of the present being a nigger war" (December 1, 1861: 3). It is harsh stuff a century and a half later but an important reminder that the fight to free the slaves was, to most people for most of the war, not a noble cause but a dangerously radical idiosyncrasy.

Because Rice's opinions were so strong and his influence so pronounced, responses through the war usually depended on politics, with opposing newspapers presenting op-

posite views of the same performances. When he played Minnesota in the summer of 1861, the *Clipper* printed adjacent accounts, the complaint of "Squibob" that Rice was only "a sort of Union man," and the view of "Chips" that the clown "was serenaded at his hotel, called out, and made as sensible a national speech as I ever listened to" (August 17, 1861: 142, 143). In 1864, when Rice brought to Chicago "Henry Cooke's Learned Dogs and Monkeys, the collection of Educated Animals, the wonderful Blind Horse Excelsior, the Comic Mules, &c., &c." (*Post*, September 10, 1864), the city papers saw his performance completely differently. Three years earlier, the *Chicago Tribune* had declared that "Rice, under the guise of Motley, has done the Federal cause much service. . . ." (September 13, 1861: 4), but this time, years of bloody war and Rice's persistence in his politics had changed things. This time, the clown was running as a Democrat for the Pennsylvania senate, and the Republican *Tribune* thundered that "DAN RICE . . . fills his ring talk with disloyal utterances and flings at Lincoln and the war. A trimmer so cautious as this personage . . . should understand that this style of thing will not pay in loyal communities" (September 23, 1864: 4). Meanwhile, the *Post*, which had also praised him in 1861, rose to his defense in diametrically opposed terms.

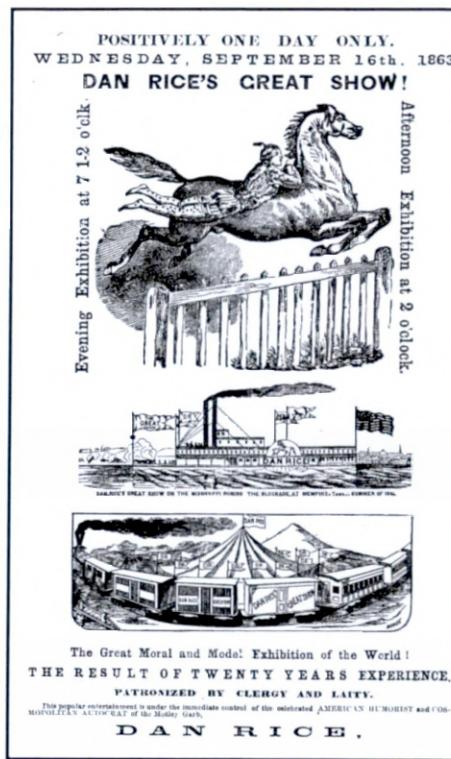
IS DAN RICE LOYAL?—Extremes often meet. The Tribune and Times of this city agree in querulous complaints of Dan Rice. They cannot comprehend how one can be loyal without being on the one hand an abolitionist and a devotee of Lincoln, or on the other in favor of 'peace at any price.' Mr. Rice is a Union man . . . in New Orleans . . . acknowledging that the encroachments of the abolitionists were hard to be borne, he urged the aggrieved to rely upon constitutional measures for redress. In Louisiana he was foremost among the noble few who argued bravely against the action of the fire-eaters in voting that state out of the Union. On his steamboat he successfully resisted every attempt to haul down the good old flag, and ran the Confederate blockade at Memphis with the Stars and Stripes in the free. He has contributed over \$30,000 to the Union cause . . . and has made more speeches and afforded more aid to volunteering than any other one

man in the United States" (September 24, 1861).

Despite this ardent support, Rice apparently modified his expression, which the *Tribune* accepted but cautiously, warning against more Copperhead sentiments: "We are glad to see that Dan. Rice is reached by our strictures on his ring-talk. . . . Loyal men find little to laugh at in Dan. Rice's quips and pasquinades persistently leveled at the President, the war, the government, and the anti-slavery sentiment of the north . . . the loyal press, wherever he goes, will do well to take pains to make him see that it will be a paying thing for him to cause his jokes in the ring to less resemble a certain kind of soda—drawn from *c pper* [sic]" (September 24, 1864: 4).

A more dramatic divergence, again based on politics, had occurred earlier, in Philadelphia in 1862. The celebrated clown was as popular in the Quaker City as he was in New Orleans, and most of the city's newspapers welcomed him. That season, along with his usual circus acts—Mrs. Dan Rice and her dancing mares, Herr [André] Cline on the tight rope, Frank Rosston astride four horses—Rice was presenting an equestrian spectacle, "The Magic Ring," with spirits and fantastic effects. As this description of one of its eleven scenes suggests, Rice's Ring

Rice newspaper advertisement used in 1863. Pfenning Archives.



might easily have been performed to the music of Wagner's Ring.

"The lovely Princess Eveline and her faithful attendant, Leela, fast in the power of the mighty Godah . . . bound within the bosom of *Etna's Burning Mountain*—King Cupid, quick descending, arrives with Herbert, Franco, and Whirlburg to the rescue of the distressed damsels—Herbert takes from the Princess' finger the FIRST of the rings which gives the Wizard power over the Four Elements—Sets her free and they ascend on *The Dragon Car over a Rolling Sea of Liquid Fire*" ("Dan Rice's Budget," February 6, 1860).

Local newspapers responded with enthusiasm. The *Inquirer* heralded him as "the great punster, wit and comical genius" (March 3, 1862: 8), declaring that the "crowded house rings nightly with the applause of a fashionable and appreciative audience" (March 6, 1862: 8). Cheering Rice as the "Prince of Fun, Conversationalist, Funster, Author and Gentleman" (March 1: 1), the *Bulletin* reported that he has "taken the town by storm" (March 5: 1), with "performances . . . generally pronounced about the best of the kind ever offered to the Philadelphia public" (March 6, 1862: 1). The *North American and United States Gazette* similarly applauded, albeit more genteelly: "No entertainment of the same character that has ever been presented to the metropolitan public has been received with so much favor as that which has been accorded to the equestrian company now performing at this hour. . . ." (March 5, 1862: 3).

The *Sunday Dispatch* disagreed. It greeted him with the old rumors and challenged him to explain (March 2, 1862: 4). Two weeks later, unsatisfied, it pounced. Under a long account headlined, "SECESSIONISM AT THE WALNUT STREET THEATRE.—ROTTEN EGGS AND TRAITOROUS SYMPATHIES," the *Dispatch* denounced Rice's "lately discovered Unionism." The newspaper account said Rice "concluded to brazen it out with an acknowledgment of his secession proclivities even now." In performance, he repeated a speech he said he had made in the South, which included the claim that "the South had been wronged." He added, "I believed so then, and I believe so now."

Upon the utterance of this infamous and insulting sentiment a perfect storm of hisses broke forth, intermingled with applause from his dead head friends. The hissing rather seemed to disconcert him, for it

was violent and prolonged, and the signs of disapprobation continued during the rest of the performance whenever Rice appeared.

According to the *Dispatch*, Rice responded with a plaintive cry to the crowd: "What have I done? what have I done?" The next night, Friday, "treated to a few more eggs," he "was mute upon the subject of Union or Secession, said nothing offensive, appeared to be pretty well cowed down. . . ." On Saturday, with "well known 'roughs'" and over 80 police in attendance, Rice--in the paper's account--while "attempting to prove himself a loyal Union man," delivered "considerable cheap buncumbe" and "manifest double dealing." He tried to explain his words in the South as necessary at the time for his safety and, contradictorily, as only joking, but the *Dispatch* turned his explanations back on him. Sarcastically, it presumed "that if Dan ever gets back to Dixie he will protest that his professions of loyalty in the North were to save his head from being knocked off, and that his admiration for the Union expressed when in the ring was all a joke!" (March 16, 1862: 2).⁵

As dramatic as the tale of Rice's bravery in New Orleans, this story may be just as much a fiction, for none of the other Philadelphia newspapers mentioned any unpleasantness.⁶ However, the account in the *Dispatch* does suggest that he was challenged from the audience. The combination of Rice's well-known opinions and the notorious turbulence of the era's crowds does make it plausible that comments or eggs may have been thrown during the war but whatever happened in Philadelphia did not reach sufficient magnitude to interrupt the praise for Rice from most of the city's dailies.

Tales of Patriotism

With the tide turning on the battlefields and then Lincoln's re-election in 1864, Rice could no longer rely on simple declarations of loyalty. He could not so blithely attack the "Republican" war, as the bloody years had changed it into what Lincoln foresaw, a battle for the soul of the country. In those changed circumstances, besides proclaiming his Union allegiance more often, Rice used a number of tactics to reinforce the image of loyalty. New editions of his songsters were published with



The *Will S. Hays*, one of the two boats used to carry Rice's circus.

Union messages inserted, some with pre-Civil War dates added to suggest a long-standing patriotism. He contributed to patriotic causes, including the full cost of a monument to be erected in Girard, Pennsylvania, his adopted home, to honor local men killed in the war. More important to the later legend of Dan Rice, three stories emerged from the war to bolster his reputation for Union loyalty.

One fiction was his assumption of the title of "Colonel." Rice's use of a military title subtly but significantly associated him with things military, which in the North necessarily meant the Union Army, more and more through its victories a symbol of the Union cause. Though it was not uncommon then for men to adopt military titles, with "Colonel" often the title of choice in the circus world,⁷ the timing of Rice's use of the title and the accompanying story show it as part of his effort to rehabilitate his reputation. According to the tale, Rice campaigned for Zachary Taylor for President in 1848 promoting the hero of the Mexican War from the circus ring and parading Taylor on the show's band wagon (alleged source of the political phrase, "on the bandwagon"). Biographers even claim Rice was a Louisiana delegate for Taylor at the Whig convention. In gratitude, goes the tale, General Taylor invited the clown to the Presidential Inauguration and honored him with the title of "Colonel" (Brown 110-11; Kunzog 50-52, 61).

The story has some connection to reality. In 1848, with Doc Spalding's circus in Louisiana, Rice depicted Taylor's recent triumph in the Mexican War by using a standard feature of the antebellum circus, the burlesque, a short scene parodying an-

other show or topical event. In this case, the clown played "Captain Dan Rice" in the burlesque, "The Battle of Buena Vista."⁸ When Taylor visited the show in Baton Rouge, Rice may have introduced him to the audience.⁹ However, if the connection went further, no other evidence shows it. Rice certainly was no delegate from Louisiana.¹⁰

More to the point, Taylor did not make him an honorary Colonel. Taylor allegedly bestowed the title in 1849 but no mention appeared then or through the 1850s. It was not until 1864, when Rice was struggling to shore up his reputation for patriotism, that he appeared as "Colonel." The first mention came in September when the *Erie Dispatch* referred to "Col. Dan Rice" (September 15, 1864), but a fictional story in the *Clipper* in August suggests Rice was using the title earlier that year. The story told of a circus clown and owner of "Colonel Dick Hayes' National American Circus and Mammoth Show," who had a "habitual assumption of boisterous declamation" and a propensity to sing patriotic songs ("The Pride of the Arena," August 27, 1864: 153). Rice, known for "boisterous declamation," patriotic songs, and a similarly straightforward two syllables to his name, also advertised a "Mammoth Exhibition" (Jamesstown *Journal*, July 8, 1864: 3). The tale of Taylor conferring an honorary commission has been accepted nearly unanimously. A historian early in this century did assert that Rice became known as "Colonel" during the war, claiming it was because he had equipped a regiment for the Union Army,¹¹ but otherwise the Taylor tale has prevailed. However, once the larger story of Rice's ardent Union loyalty comes into question, the timing of the "Colonel" story spotlights it as part of his attempt to rehabilitate his reputation.

Similarly fueled by the effort to prove loyalty was the tale that Rice's clown costume inspired the Uncle Sam cartoon, as it has evolved from a Thomas Nast drawing. (There were other, similar cartoons mid-century.) It is certainly possible that the famous cartoonist found his inspiration in the famous clown for the now-famous image of the United States. Many elements point in that direction. Rice sported the same goatee that now appears on the Uncle Sam caricature, and he did wear stripes in some costumes. Despite the apparent

visual similarity, evidence argues against the claim. First, contemporary sources do not name Rice as the model, and the same claim of inspiration for the cartoon figure has been made for other popular performers, such as Dan Marble and the Jonathan figure of the early American stage.¹² More importantly, there are strong differences between any particular costume of Rice's—he wore many—and the Uncle Sam cartoon. Ironically, the bit of evidence that seems most strongly to suggest a direct line from Dan Rice, his goatee, actually shows the opposite. Rice was well-known for his chin whiskers, so much that they might be considered a trademark, but early versions of "Uncle Sam," originally appearing in the 1860s when Rice's influence would have been strongest, were clean-shaven.¹³

Rice did wear costumes with stripes and sometimes stars but they were standard decorative features on clown costumes. The picture most often used to argue Rice's influence shows a single stripe up one leg of Rice's tights rather than the striped pants on the caricature, and blouse and puffy shorts instead of vest and long coat. Rice was pictured in a "flag suit" in an 1860 songster, *Dan Rice's American Humorist and Shaksperian [sic] Jester Song and Joke Book* (1, 31), but it looks nothing like the cartoon and more literally like a flag, with horizontal stripes on both legs—like rings around the leg—and up the left side and arm, and stars on the right torso and arm. An 1858 publicity booklet for his show, *Dan Rice's Pictorial*, includes an illustration that does resemble the striped pants and starred vest of the caricature, but it is on another performer in his circus, with no reference to the flag and or Rice himself. Rice may have worn it but at the time he was appearing in the ring in the dignified clothing of a middle-class gentleman. Perhaps most significantly, Thomas Nast was an ardent Republican, unlikely to have modeled his Uncle Sam on someone, however popular, who was fiercely attacking Republicans.

Whatever visual similarities exist, the story was propelled by Rice's need to establish his loyalty to the Union. His "flag suit" in the 1860 songster did precede the war but as illustration for a speech that made the point he argued early in the war, that abolitionists posed the key danger to the Union (30-32). If the 1862 account in the Philadelphia *Sunday*



Dan Rice in New Orleans in 1861 in the regalia of the stars and stripes.

Dispatch can be credited, Rice wore "all the glory of tri-colored clothing, bedizened with glittering stars," but in a blatant attempt to prove his patriotism. Neither the "flag suit" in the 1860 songster nor the 1862 account demonstrates any particular connection to the Uncle Sam cartoon. Instead, Rice was doing what generations of performers and politicians have done, using the flag to parade their patriotism, though in his case he wore rather than waved the flag.

The third tale that has become a standard part of the Rice legend, reinforcing the assertion of his Union loyalty, is the alleged friendship with Abraham Lincoln. The assertion is plausible, like the other Rice tales, and this one is even possible. Both were prominent public figures mid-century, and Lincoln, especially with his famous sense of humor, would certainly have known of Rice. One link did occur in 1864, when the busts of Lincoln and Rice were displayed in tandem at the Sanitary Fair in Chicago, as "The Two American Humorists."¹⁴ They may have met. Stephen Douglas, Lincoln's foe in their famous 1858 campaign for the Senate from Illinois, spoke to a crowd in Rice's tent gathered to watch his circus,¹⁵ and Lincoln may have talked with Rice during that campaign or some other time the clown trouped through Illinois. Rice also played Washington during the years of Lincoln's administration, when the President was known for

his eagerness to escape the pressures of office in amusements. The authoritative *Lincoln Day-By Day* does note that he spoke in a circus tent in 1858, but it was not Rice's and no other reference to the circus appears.¹⁶

Though it would have helped his reputation for patriotism, Rice himself could not claim friendship with Lincoln, for he was attacking the President. Those attacks did not prove disloyalty but, as the *Chicago Tribune* wrote, ardent Union men found "little to laugh at in Dan. Rice's quips and pasquinades persistently leveled at the President, the war, the government, and the anti-slavery sentiment of the north" (September 24, 1864: 4). Even later in the century, Rice did not abandon his hostility toward the dead President. In an 1881 interview in the *Chicago Tribune*, Rice spoke indignantly about the recent assassination of President Garfield but dismissed any comparison with Lincoln, saying that he had died at the right time (November 25, 1881).

So nothing other than conjecture and proximity in the 1864 exhibit connects Rice and Lincoln, much less confirms the grander tale of Rice as intimate companion and valued advisor of the president. Stories proliferate off this core fiction, of Lincoln stopping by to chat with Rice backstage, of Lincoln seeking advice on the mood of the country, of Lincoln finding escape from the pressures of war in Rice's friendship and jokes, but most are clearly concoctions of a later time. In 1901, a biographer borrowed a tale from an 1849 publicity pamphlet, of trickery foiled in a horse race, and added Lincoln to it.¹⁷

Rice's struggle to retain his popularity came to depend on simultaneously proclaiming his loyalty to the Union and, in an appeal to the Northern Democrats and anti-abolitionists in his crowds, denouncing the Republican prosecution of the war and the Republican leader particularly. It would have been easier for him simply to deny any sympathy for the South and cheer the Union. Such apparent neutrality would have served him well, as it served others, but he chose to continue risking his popularity, even as he struggled to maintain it. More to the point, what Rice said in the ring echoed what he said on the campaign trail, as he campaigned against his Republican opponent for a seat in the state legislature of Pennsylvania.¹⁸

A question remains. Why did these fictions about Rice become

standard? How did his Southern sentiments get turned on their head, apparently quite easily? The reason lies in changes in politics and in performance through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. In politics, the Civil War settled into a comforting national amnesia, with the anguished cross-currents mostly forgotten, and the whole conflict reduced in common memory to chivalric Johnny Reb against nobly righteous Billy Yank, with each side enjoying a sainted martyr, Lincoln in death and the gentlemanly Lee in loss. Though the continuing presence of black Americans made slavery too sore a topic to be so neatly resolved or easily forgotten, most people soon pretended that at least the North had been united in opposition to slavery. Since Rice was never the Southern traitor his enemies charged, the only way to fit him into that simplistic North-versus-South pattern was to re-create him as a Union patriot.

Performance too changed in a way that made the fictions about Rice seem more plausible than actual events. He had embodied the antebellum mix of issues and performance but that mix disappeared, replaced by a popular performance that stood outside public discourse, an entertaining escape from the hard issues of real life. No longer would it be credible that a circus clown would say anything partisan. That new attitude can be seen in the Rice biographers' dismissal of charges of Southern sympathies: One ignored his long-standing discussion of political events to claim that the war impelled him to "turn the ring into a rostrum" to speak against secession (Brown 142), and another made the remarkable statement that Rice never spoke on secession at all (Kunzog 177). The twentieth century could envision Rice making generally patriotic statements and even, in emergency, boldly defending the flag, but anything else had become too far-fetched to believe. So Dan Rice, argumentative clown and consummate public speaker, became fictionalized into sweet "Uncle Dan," a favorite of children and innocent of politics.

Dan Rice took strong political stands. His opinions during the Civil War, though popular at the time, now provoke discomfort, and twentieth-century notions of the circus clown as apolitical make it easy to evade that discomfort. However, it is better to face the evidence, including the awkward aspects, than to per-

sist in sentimentalized fictions about this remarkable circus clown and public figure.

Innumerable people have helped me in this work, and to name a few risks slighting many others, but I do want to thank Fred Dahlinger, Jr., Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Fred D. Pfening III, John Polacsek, Richard J. Reynolds, William L. Slout and Stuart Thayer, plus the many others at the CHS convention, whose conversation and ideas broadened my perspective.

Notes

1. Maria Ward Brown, *The Life and Times of Dan Rice*, Long Branch, New Jersey: Author, 1901, 362-63; John Kunzog, *The One-Horse Show: The Life and Times of Dan Rice, Circus Jester and Philanthropist*, Jameston, New York: Author, 1962, 177-78. Kunzog tried to explain why no one reported Rice's alleged act of brave defiance, which as he acknowledged "should have made the headlines." Tying logic in knots, the biographer rationalized that newspapers did not report such a newsworthy event because they were "shackled to silence by the appalling gravity of the Secession Act."
2. Irwin Silber, *Songs of the Civil War*, New York: Columbia UP, 1960, 49; also *Clipper*, February 2, 1861: 335. Attacks on two other performers for their Southern sympathies were based on allegations that each, Caroline Richings and Maggie Mitchell, sang the "Southern Marcellaise" (*Clipper* February 9, 1861: 343; December 7, 1861: 270).
3. December 11, 1860, as quoted in Brown, *Dan Rice*, 362-63.
4. These reports from Erie newspapers were copied by Rice's biographer, Brown, *Dan Rice*, pp. 362-63. (367-69, 424), who again tried to build a pedestal for him but undercut it.
5. A week after quoting this account in a full column, more than it usually gave any performance subject, the *Clipper* reported that the theater lessee, Mrs. Garrettson, had attempted to close the engagement but Rice insisted on continuing. The *Clipper* concluded that it "is not likely that 'sawdust' will be again attempted at the 'Walnut'" (March 22, 1862: 391; March 29, 1862: 399).
6. Having not yet read the other Philadelphia newspapers as I wrote my dissertation, I relied too heavily in it on the *Dispatch* account.
7. Rice had been a clown in 1847 on the circus of "Colonels" Alvah Mann and Rufus Welch, then with "Colonel" Lent's Mammoth National Circus in Baltimore. Rice also gave a benefit in 1860 in Philadelphia for "Colonel" James Bancker, a retired circus pioneer keeping a saloon adjacent to Rice's circus (*Clipper* January 14, 1860: 311). "Colonel" T. Allston Brown, known as a theatre historian, began as a circus press agent and writer of an eight-part circus history for the *Clipper* (a series that culminated with Dan Rice, December 22, 1860-February 9, 1861).
8. John A. Dingess, circus history/ memoirs, [c.1890], ts., Dan Draper, Circus World Museum, 311-12. (Original ms., Hertzberg Circus Collection, San Antonio Public Library.)
9. J. H. Glenroy, *Ins and Outs of Circus Life*, Boston, 1885, 72-73.
10. See Richard C. Bain and Judith H. Parris, *Convention Decisions and Voting Records* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1973) 36-43, on the Louisiana delegation.
11. Earle Forrest, *History of Washington County (Pennsylvania)*, Chicago: Clarke, 1926, 1: 924.
12. On Marble, see Joseph Jefferson's *Autobiography* (New York, 1889), 20. On the Jonathan figure, see Francis Hodge, *Yankee Theater: The Image of America on the Stage, 1825-1850* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1964), 56.
13. See Albert Bigelow Paine, *Th. Nast, His Period and His Pictures* (1904, Gloucester, Massachusetts : Smith, 1967), 135, 202; Morton Keller, *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968; *Leslie's Illustrated* 17 October 1863: 64; "The Carpet Bagger" songster cover of 1868, rpt. in Sam Dennison, *Scandalize My Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* (New York and London: Garland, 1982), 246.
14. Carl Sandburg repeated this information, albeit confusing Dan with his famous predecessor, the early blackface minstrel, T. D. Rice, in *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, 4 vols., New York: Harcourt, 1939, 3: 300. The *Catalogue of Paintings, Statuary, Etc.* for Chicago's "Great North-Western Fair" in June 1865 lists the "original bust of President Lincoln, in plaster, modeled from life, at Chicago, in 1860" by Leonard W. Volk (323), but does not mention Rice's bust. The prominent sculptor Volk, a relative of Stephen Douglas, had designed a monument of Douglas, for which Rice had contributed a benefit (Chicago *Tribune* June 28, 1862: 4). Volk's bust of Rice now has a place of honor in the Hertzberg Circus Museum in San Antonio, after traveling west with Rice's descendants and being unearthed on a farm in North Dakota in the 1950s.
15. Dingess ms. 264; Bloomington (Illinois) *Pantagraph*, July 21, 1858.
16. *Lincoln Day-By-Day: A Chronology, 1809-1865*, Earl Schenck Miers, general ed., Vol. 2: 1849-1860, ed. William E. Baringer, 228.
17. *Sketches from the Life of Dan Rice, the Shakspelian [sic] Jester and Original Clown*, Albany, New York, 1849, 75; and Brown, 43; also Kunzog, 13. For other enriched-Rice, Lincoln-added tales, see Brown, 46, 144-45, 189, 219, 239, and Kunzog, 219-24. One book, notable for inaccuracy even among the inaccurate biographies, makes the alleged friendship the center of its story, Don Carle Gillette, *He Made Lincoln Laugh: The Story of Dan Rice*, New York: Exposition, 1967. Gillette excuses the lack of evidence for connection between the two men by explaining that Rice met so often with Lincoln that reporters never noted it because they "actually failed to appreciate the full significance of his visits" (149).
18. For a fuller picture of that campaign, see David Carlyon, *Dan Rice's Aspirational Project: The Nineteenth-Century Circus Clown and Middle-Class Formation* (Northwestern University, 1993), 287-90.

This paper was presented at the 1996 Circus Historical Society convention.

A supremely confident and assured Buffalo Bill Cody brought his Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World to the booming western city of Chicago in 1893. In the five years since he had last played in the United States, Cody had presented his show in all the major cities of Europe to adoring crowds and appreciative royalty.

Chicago too had had its share of the limelight in recent times. Completely recovered from the disastrous fire of 1871, the city had been rebuilt using the newly created "Chicago Style" of architecture whose main feature was the steel framed skyscraper. After a fierce and acrimonious battle with St. Louis, New York city, and Washington D.C., waged in the newspapers of the nation and in both houses of Congress, Chicago had won official approval of its bid to host the World's Columbian Exposition.

By 1893 the institution of the World's Fair was well established in the western world. The idea was born in the London World's Fair of 1851 and after the great success of that enterprise it was unusual for a year to pass without at least one major exposition being presented. (Badger, xvi)

Chicago itself was a mass of contradictions--a city developing so quickly that no one could quite understand its problems or potential. By 1890 Chicago had over a million citizens and was the second largest city in the United States. Chicago also led the nation in criminal arrests per-thousand persons, its major industry was liquor distilling, and 162,000 persons lived in the slum districts of the city. (Badger, 34-6)

But Chicago took its social problems seriously, and became the country's largest laboratory for social reform. Jane Addams and Graham Taylor helped form the Civic Federation to address the problems of the poor. (Hirsch and Goler, 74) The University of Chicago was founded and emphasized the study of the new social sciences.

Conservatives in city government sought to remove music

OUTSIDE THE GATES: BUFFALO BILL AND THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

By Sarah Blackstone

and art from the curriculum of the public schools (pianos and art supplies were thought to be an unfair burden on Chicago taxpayers, especially since no positive gain could be achieved by these expenditures) (*Chicago Tribune*, 5-15 March, 1893), while at the same time, the city's elite were donating money, time, and energy to the formation of a city symphony orchestra to show its appreciation of culture and the sophistication of its citizens.

While hundreds died of cholera and other diseases the great Sanitary Canal was begun, and while citizens called for better garbage collection

Col. William F. Cody, king of the wild west showmen. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.



tion, an engineer was proposing that the city burn that very garbage to make power (with no odor or dust created). (*Chicago Tribune*, 2 March, 1893, page 8, col. 1)

To house its world's fair, Chicago built a city within a city. This marvel of temporary construction techniques and unified architectural design became known as the White City. It owed nothing to the new architectural style seen in

downtown Chicago, only a few miles to the north, and within a year it would be burned to the ground by the destitute and unemployed citizens who had taken shelter in the abandoned buildings to escape the harsh winter of 1894. (Badger, 130)

On the eve of the last millennium Americans sought to define themselves by glorifying their past and reveling in the speed with which they had become a civilized country, and by presenting their accomplishments and their history to the world. The opportunity to host a World's Fair gave the city and the nation the very forum it craved for its message of progress and civilization. The fair was considered to be an unmitigated success and is remembered as one of the great accomplishments of a young city, but as Reid Badger has so succinctly observed: The World's Columbian Exposition, the greatest international fair of its time, which was to express the continuity of progressive American civilization, and open a new epoch in man's comprehension and control of nature, expressed far more clearly the confusions and contradictions that existed at the core of a society, between what was believed, desired, and desperately hoped for, and what was becoming inescapably more real and actual. (xiii)

Nowhere were these confusions and contradictions more obvious than in America's attitude toward the frontier. At the 1893 World's Fair, Frederick Jackson Turner gave his now famous paper entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History". At this same fair the log cabin where Sitting Bull was murdered was displayed on the midway, and Buffalo Bill presented his version of

the west twice a day in his show grounds across the street. The United States government presented extensive exhibits on Indian customs and life before conquest in the Government Building, and, in protest, Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian School, presented his own exhibit of American Indians as fully capable American citizens. (Badger, 105)

Individually or as an aggregate these displays did little to clarify the frontier experience for Americans or foreign visitors. Each had its claim to authenticity, to historic importance, to educational value. And each had its exaggerations, misrepresentations, and exclusions, caused by the need to present entertaining exhibits, and to present an acceptable version of history to fairgoers. Americans have yet to come to grips with their frontier history, and the effort to rewrite the Western stories, myths, legends, images and scholarship of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition is an ongoing process.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West had gained valuable experience with international expositions over the years. The show's association with the World's Industrial and Cotton Exposition in New Orleans in 1885 had been a disaster, (except for the discovery of Annie Oakley), but their presence at the American Exposition at Earl's Court (in honor of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee) in 1887, the Paris Exposition of 1889 (which was the model for the Chicago Fair), and the International Horticultural Exposition (again at Earl's Court) in 1892 had ensured their fortunes in Europe and taught them that the throngs of people who attended such events would also attend the Wild West if the show grounds were readily available. The show had gained polish during the ten years since its conception, and the star performers at least had learned the manners and ways of Europe's highest society.

When the World's Columbian Exposition for Chicago was announced Nate Salsbury, Cody's superlative business manager, immediately applied for a place on the fair grounds. Undeterred by a negative reply from the fair's organizing committee, Salsbury quickly arranged to lease fifteen acres between Sixty-second and Sixty-third Streets and Madison and Stoney Island Avenues. This lot was located directly across the street from what was to become the

62d and 63d Streets.—Opposite World's Fair.
Open Now, **TWICE EVERY DAY**, Rain or Shine.
Sunday included, at 3 and 8:30 p.m.
Doors open at 1 and 6:30 p.m.

The coolest place when sunshine, dry as a parlor when it rains.
No weary walking necessary, only fifty feet from all trains.

The  To All.
ALL ROADS LEAD TO
BUFFALO BILL'S
WILD WEST
And Congress of Rough
Riders of the World
Voted a
World Beater.
All Races Represented in
one Combined Entertainment
Reproducing Scenes, Incidents,
etc., in the Life of
Genuine Russian Cossacks
from the Caucasus.
(The first Russian Cossacks
ever brought to the United States joined BUFFALO BILL'S
in London in May, 1892.)
Genuine Arabs from
the Desert.
Indians—Sioux, Comanche,
Pawnee, Blackfeet.
American Cowboys, Mexi-
can Vaqueros, Mexican
Rural Life, Grande
Caballero, and
Others.
Grand International Musical Drill by United States, English,
French, and German Soldiers.

18,000 Seats. Covered Grand Stand. Herds of Buffalo, Wild Steers, and
Bucking Bronchos.
Alley L. Illinois Central Suburban, Grip, Electric, and Horse Cars all stop
at the entrance.
Illinois Central Through World's Fair Trains from Van Buren Street reach
the grounds in 15 minutes.

Stations at 62d and 63d Sts.
ADMISSION, 50 CENTS.

This Buffalo Bill ad appeared on the back of a guide booklet for the Columbian Exposition.

fair's main entrance. (Sell and Weybright, 193)

The management of the Wild West had recently added the Congress of Rough Riders of the World to their show title and list of featured events. This change occurred for several different reasons. Salsbury had always envisioned a show whose primary aim was to display the horsemanship of various cultures. He had had little luck advancing his vision with Cody, who remained committed to a show of western life. However, during the winter of 1890, while the show was quartered in Germany, rumors spread that the Indians with Cody's show were being mistreated.¹ Salsbury moved quickly to disprove these rumors by inviting the consul generals from both Berlin and Hamburg to visit the grounds and inspect the Indians. They both declared the Indians fit and healthy. (Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 351) Not satisfied that this would put the issue to rest, it was decided that Cody, Major John Burke (Cody's publicity agent and not a major), and all of the Indians would return to Washington D.C.

where they would meet with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Because Cody needed the permission of this Commissioner to have Indians touring with the show, it was extremely important that his reputation as a good caretaker of the Indians be maintained.

Salsbury was left in Germany to keep order in the winter quarters and to prepare to move the show to England in the spring. Deeply worried that Cody would not be able to return to Europe with a complement of Indians, Salsbury spent the winter locating and hiring replacement riders from across Europe, and planning a new show that would replace the western events with feats of daring by riders from all nations. He recruited seven groups of equestrians that were composed of about a dozen riders each. The seven groups were Cossacks from Russia, led by a Prince who was billed as a direct descendant of Mezzepa; South American gauchos from Argentina; Mexican vaqueros, led by the fabulous roper Vincenzo Orapeza; Syrian Tribesmen, sometimes billed as Arabs; and cavalry units from the English, French, and German armies. Added to the cowboys and U. S. Cavalry units already with the show, this made an impressive start on Salsbury's Congress of Rough Riders, and circumstances dictated that Cody would at least have to give the new events a tryout.

Salsbury conceived and rehearsed performances to showcase each nationality of rider. The gauchos, Mexicans, Syrians, and Cossacks each had about ten minutes to demonstrate "native sports and dances, and feats of horsemanship" (1893 Wild West Program, Buffalo Bill Historical Center), and several races were added to the program which pitted riders of different nationalities against one another. The cavalry units rehearsed a joint event to demonstrate various battle maneuvers.

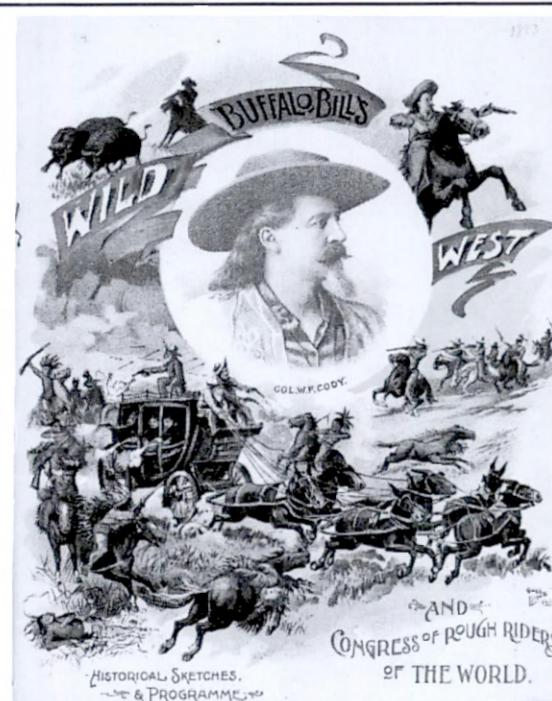
In the meantime Cody had returned to the United States with his Indian performers. However, Major Burke had to take them to their scheduled meeting with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs as Cody was summoned to the Standing Rock Reservation by General Nelson Miles. The Ghost Dance movement was in full swing and the government wanted Sitting Bull removed from the dance grounds. Miles felt Cody could avoid violence by persuading his old acquaintance to come in peacefully. Their efforts were undercut by the Indian Agent on the reservation, and

Sitting Bull was murdered by tribal police officers.² Soon after this the Ghost Shirt movement was wiped out completely by the massacre of Big Foot and his people at Wounded Knee. (Cody served as a liaison between the regular army and the Nebraska National Guard during this time, but was not present during the slaughter. He did later make a film of Wounded Knee but no prints survive.)

When it was clear that his services were no longer needed by the government, Cody applied for permission to recruit new Indian performers for his show (those that had accompanied Burke to Washington had already been examined, declared healthy, and returned to the reservation). This permission was granted, but only after Cody agreed to accept nineteen Indian prisoners of war from the Ghost Dance movement as a part of his contingent. Buffalo Bill gathered his new performers (including an Indian youth named Johnny No Neck who had been found among the frozen bodies at Wounded Knee, and the Sioux men who had been imprisoned as "hostiles" and returned to Europe).

Cody and Salsbury spent the 1892 season refining the new show that kept most of the established Western events and included the Rough Riders as well. The rough riders were popular with the English audiences, and gave the show a chance to remind audiences of its extensive travels and world-wide appeal. Cody agreed to keep the Rough Riding events in the show, and the new name of Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World was agreed upon for the Chicago World's Fair.

Cody's contractor L. N. Parker was dispatched to Chicago to lay out the site and to build the amphitheater for the Chicago stand. The amphitheater was lit by its own, large electric light plant, was constructed from Georgia pine, and seated 22,000 spectators. This was slightly less seating capacity than the Paris and London amphitheaters Parker had constructed, but was billed as the biggest grandstand ever put up in America. (*New York Recorder*, May 10, 1892, Buffalo Bill scrapbooks) *The Chicago Tribune* described the setup in this way: "The seats in the inclosure (sic) are around two sides and one end.



Cover of the 1893 Buffalo Bill program.

At the other end and concealing the stables is a large painting of California mountain scenery. This is 44 x 306 feet and the half now completed shows the Webber Canon with Pulpit Rock and Devil's Slide. The work is by Bender and Schiller." (14 April, 1893, P 3)

The company that arrived in Chicago consisted of 450 horses and 600 performers (mostly men). In addition to the show, customers could see an Indian encampment, the horse tents, Buffalo Bill's tent, Annie Oakley's quarters, Major Burke's log cabin, the buffalo enclosure, and other sights. Major Burke had ten years of experience at advertising the show and the Chicago papers were full of human interest stories about performers (especially the Rough Riders), lengthy descriptions of life with the show, and straight advertising. In one such article it was revealed that 5,000 pounds of beef would be ordered by the show for a single week (*Chicago Enter Ocean*, n.d., Cody scrapbooks), and Buffalo Bill won additional notice for the show by giving a special performance, free of charge for 15 thousand youngsters who could not afford to attend otherwise. (Sell and Weybright, 199) The show featured nineteen events and began with "The Star Spangled Banner" (not yet the national anthem) played by the Cowboy Band, and moved briskly through the

Grand Review where the standard bearer rode Sitting Bull's horse—a gift given to the chief when he appeared in the show and returned to Buffalo Bill after Sitting Bull's death. (Russell, *Lives and Legends*, 363). This was followed by Annie Oakley's sharpshooting exhibition, a horse race between international riders, the Pony Express, and the Attack on the Emigrant Train. These events were followed by Syrian Horsemen, Cossack Horsemen, Johnny Baker's sharpshooting act, and the Mexican Horsemen. The tenth event was a race between Prairie, Spanish, and Indian girls, followed by the old standby, Cowboy Fun which featured saddle bronc riding. Military Evolutions featured the new military groups, then came the Attack on the Deadwood Coach, a

race between Indian boys, bareback, and Life Customs of the Indians. The final three events were Sharpshooting by Buffalo Bill, Buffalo Hunt, and The Battle of the Little Bighorn (sometimes called Custer's Last Fight). Early in the season the final event was another old standby, Attack on the Settler's Cabin.

The show was enthusiastically received by audiences and the doubtful story that visitors to the Wild West thought they had seen the whole fair and had gone away satisfied is often repeated. The show earned somewhere near one million dollars in its run from late April to mid-October, and has been called the greatest season in the outdoor entertainment industry in America. (Fellows, 74) This extraordinary success was achieved in part because the fair grounds were not open on Sunday, but the Wild West was. Susan B. Anthony remarked that, "a young man would learn more from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show than from listening to an intolerant sermon." Cody sent Anthony box seat tickets and saluted her during the performance she attended for this bit of free publicity. (Badger, 164)

Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World did not, quite obviously, provide an accurate depiction of the frontier west. While Cody was careful to portray as many of the elements of Western life as he could (including women riding astride, Native Americans and their villages and customs,



Nate Salsbury, Cody's partner and business manager.

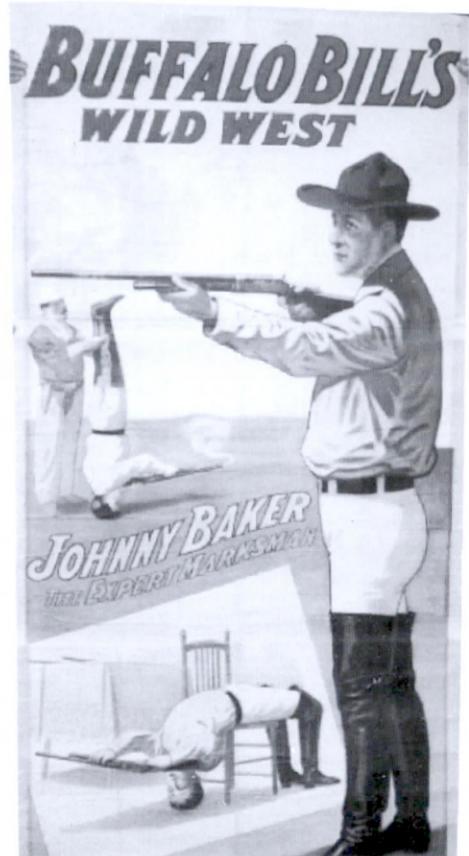
and the buffalo), the western content had been diluted by the addition of the new Rough Riding events, and even those events that claimed to depict actual moments in Western history did not tell the whole story. Due partly to the restrictions of space and time, partly to Buffalo Bill's huge ego, and partly to a spirit of nationalism and expansionism that was rampant in the late nineteenth century, the show fell far short of its goal of being completely genuine. The show did, however, create powerful images with its performers who had actually been there and done the things they portrayed, its genuine properties and costumes, its livestock, and gun smoke. All of this helped to form the complex structure of the myth of the American West.

At the same time that Cody was performing his show across the street from the fair grounds, Frederick Jackson Turner was writing and delivering his now famous (or perhaps, infamous), "Frontier Thesis." Trained by Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins in scientific methodology and positivist philosophy, Turner was teaching at the University of Wisconsin when he began writing a series of essays on history. His mentor, Adams, saw potential in his work on the frontier and invited him to present an essay

to the American Historical Association Meeting at the World's Columbian Exposition. Turner reluctantly agreed to speak after his suggestion that one of his students be allowed to present a paper was refused. Turner was one of only five scholars to present his ideas at this meeting, but his paper did not create much of a stir. He later circulated his work among prominent American historians and received lukewarm responses.³

However, within a decade Turner's essay was being lauded as a landmark in American history, within twenty years Turner himself was president of the American Historical Association, and a hundred years later historians gathered to commemorate and discuss this one piece of scholarship. All of this occurred more because of his success with a broad, popular audience, than because of his acceptance by the scholarly community. His argument that the national character of the American people was formed by the frontier experience, and that America could be understood only in terms of the development of the frontier found an enthusiastic and appreciative audience among the American people. His ideas became the philosophical backbone of a spirit of nationalism that was sweeping the country. As Martin Ridge points out, "His emphasis on progress, mobility, materialism, and individualism reinforced traditional late nineteenth-century ideas and validated them for succeeding generations. . . . Turner drew celebratory conclusions and wrote toward an optimistic future." (142) In the intervening century scholars have struggled with Turner's sweeping assertions and at various times have praised and vilified his work.

The criticism of Turner's work centers on his perceived lack of objectivity, factual errors in his presentation of evidence, and especially on his exclusion of everyone but white males from his analysis. The debate over his methods and his conclusions has provided the engine for scholarship on the American West throughout the twentieth century, and few if any such studies fail to mention his ideas. Turner's historical analysis of the frontier was as flawed as Cody's exhibition of the West, but the combination of Cody's images and Turner's analysis have formed a powerful impression of our past that cannot be erased or replaced by all our subsequent efforts to correct their errors. A century after these



Johnny Baker, a long time feature of the Buffalo Bill Wild West. Ken Harck collection.

two men created their versions of the west, Americans still struggle to define themselves and evaluate their past. As we look to the next millennium, as the creators of theatrical images and the writers of historical scholarship, I wonder what we can bring to the process, and who among us will stimulate the imaginations of Americans a hundred years in the future.

Notes

1. For a complete analysis of Buffalo Bill's treatment of the Indians in the show see Sarah Blackstone "Simplifying the Native American: Wild West Shows Exhibit the 'Indian' in *Staging Difference: Cultural Pluralism in American Theatre and Drama*, New York: Peter Lang, 1995.

2. See Don Russell's *Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill*, p. 354-69 for a complete account of this shameful affair.

3. See Martin Ridge, "Turner the Historian: A Long Shadow," *Journal of the New Republic*, Vol. 13, no. 2, 133-144, for further information on Turner and this essay. This volume of this journal contains a series of articles on Turner and his complete body of work.

P. T. BARNUM'S GREAT MUSEUM MENAGERIE, HIPPODROME AND TRAVELING WORLD'S FAIR

Season of 1873

By Stewart Sawyer

This is the fourth article in the series concerned with the Coup-Castello-Barnum partnership. The first, "Prelude to Barnum: The Coup and Castello Circus of 1870" appeared in the July-August, 1971 Bandwagon. The second, "P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, and Hippodrome" was printed in the July-August, 1976 Bandwagon. The third, "P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Exposition and World's Fair, The Season of 1872" appeared in the September-October 1990 issue.

The Barnum circus came off the road at the end of the 1872 season, and moved into the Hippotheatron Building on 14th Street in New York. The winter performances were scheduled to begin on 11 November, but were postponed one week because of an illness among the horses. W. C. Coup set about preparations for 1873. In December, P. T. Barnum went to New Orleans to reclaim property he had leased to Pardon A. Older for a circus bearing Barnum's name, partly financed by the old showman. This outfit had left Louisville on 4 November, and followed a route through Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Louisiana, ending up in New Orleans. The tour was not a success, and after an eight-day stand in New Orleans, Older closed the operation. While Barnum was attending to the sal-

vage, he was informed that the Hippotheatron had burned to the ground.

Returning to New York Barnum found his partners in despair. Coup was ready to forego traveling in 1873, according to Arthur Saxon, and treasurer Hurd was distressed by the loss of the \$50,000 revenue that the winter show was expected to contribute.¹ But Barnum, in his autobiography, said that his own attitude was that "only pluck, courage, and a liberal outlay of money," were necessary to get the show on the road.²

He referred to the rebuilding of the circus on the front page of the 1873 courier: "Although the fire of Dec. 24, 1872, totally destroyed my third museum building, and a magnificent collection of rare animals making my losses by fire, within fifteen years, exceed a million of dollars --I have emerged again from the cinders and smoke with an unimpaired constitution, unabated energies, and a more earnest determination than ever to gratify, as I have always so successfully done, the ever-recurring demands of the amusement-seeking public. Fortunately, I had sent to New Orleans, for exhibition during the holidays, duplicates of nearly all the animals destroyed. And, for

The Barnum lot in 1873. The three pole big top is in back. One of the parade tableaus is at center right. Circus World Museum collection.

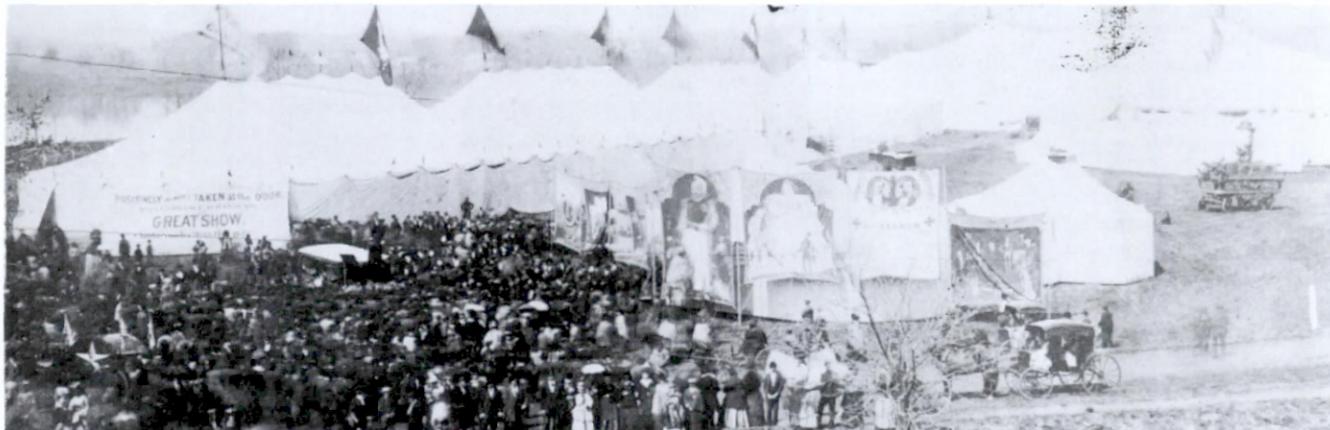
tunately also, telegraphic wires and oceanic cables enable us, in these days, to accomplish more in three months than we could formerly have done in as many years."³

None of the horses, wagons, nor any rolling stock had been lost. The performers lost all their property, and several benefit performances were arranged at the Academy of Music, just across the street from the ashes of the Hippotheatron. Barnum himself appeared at these events, and some relief was provided for the performers.

The money loss to the partners was \$300,000 by Barnum's statement, and there was but \$90,000 insurance. The circus had grossed a million dollars in 1872, which left a profit of about \$250,000. This, combined with the insurance proceeds, was available to rebuild the third of the property that had been lost. It would seem to have been enough, though Barnum proceeded to spend lavishly.

Having framed the largest circus in the country in 1871, and having mounted it on the railroads in 1872, the Barnum-Coup forces could only enlarge it in 1873 to surpass what they had already accomplished. There were thirty-eight circuses on tour in 1873, and the partners apparently were not of a mind to be second to any of them.

Coup was in charge of rebuilding the "Greatest Show on Earth," as they now called it, and most of the work was done in New York City. The repairing and redecorating of the 150 wagons (including parade vehicles and cages) was assigned to Fielding & Sons of 41st Street, and Sebastian and Saal on 3d Avenue. Higgins, the well-known tent maker, at 192 West Street made the tents, of which there were twelve, including a big top that would seat 13,000 people. R.S. Walker of Allen Street was given a contact for \$15,000 worth of



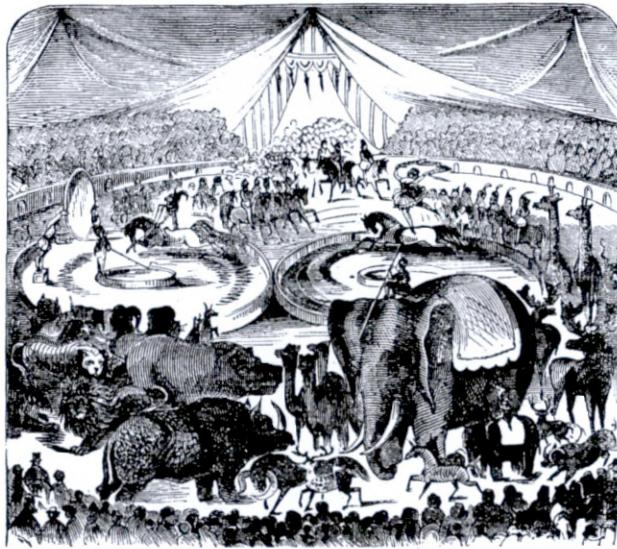
anners and costumes. At the shops of William Cummins & Son in Bergen, New Jersey, flat cars were built or refurbished. Six sleeping cars were converted from passenger coaches at New Haven. In Cleveland enough stock cars for 300 horses were newly built or repaired at the McNary & Claflen works.

William Wallace, a taxidermist at 616 Broadway, prepared over 500 birds that were displayed in about twenty museum cages. Poles were made at local shipyards. The parade horses were wintered at Coup's farm in Delavan, Wisconsin; ring horses were boarded at New Brunswick, New Jersey and Newton, Long Island. The menagerie, once it was recalled from P. A. Old-er's "Barnum Show" in New Orleans, and with new additions, was housed in Commodore Vanderbilt's stables at 30th Street and Ninth Avenue in New York.

Once all this work was done, and all the animals and performers gathered, the circus opened at the American Institute Building, known as the Rink, at 63d and 3d on Saturday March 29, just ninety-five days after the fire.

William C. Coup was general manager. Dan Castello was in charge of the circus performance, and S. H. Hurd was treasurer. These three, each with a twenty percent interest, and Barnum, with forty, made up the show's ownership. Most of the staff, and many of the workmen, were the same as in 1872. Luke Tilden, assistant manager; Ben Lusbie, chief ticket agent; Fritz Hartman, band leader; W. L. Jukes, museum manager; Charles White, menagerie manager; Dr. Asa Berry, veterinarian; Peter Halstead, master of transportation; George Coup, candy privilege, and the Bunnell Brothers, sideshow owners, all occupied the same spots as in the prior season. J. L. Hutchinson, a press agent in 1872, was again in charge of the sale of Barnum's autobiography in 1873, a task which made him a fortune. Charles McLean, superintendent of canvas, came from the Older circus.

The show was much larger than it had been, the 130 workmen of 1872, became 300 in 1873. The canvas crew was the largest section at eighty-eight men. The teamsters numbered forty-five, as did the train crew. Advertising, including the bill-



GREAT DOUBLE HIPPODROME EXPOSITION,

The two ring interior of the big top as illustrated in the 1873 courier. Pfening Archives.

posters, employed twenty. The menagerie crew had eighteen. Oddly, there were only six ushers to handle crowds up to 13,000.

The first stand after New York, and the first under-canvas stand was Brooklyn on 16-19 April. They set up on the Capitoline Grounds, a place where Barnum was to show several times over the next ten seasons.

In the Courier, and in daily newspapers advertisements, the statement "20 center pole pavilion" was made. This is confusing to a modern reader, and can only be guessed at as meaning all the center poles on the lot. But even then, the numbers don't make sense. We must conjecture that since one pavilion led to another the total of all the public areas was meant. In fact, the big top had three center poles, and sixty quarter-poles. Coup, in an 1879 interview, said that the tent was 410 by 210 feet with 100 quarter poles. The *Clipper* said it was 300 by 200 feet. C. G. Sturtevant said it was a 1 50-foot round with three fifty foot middles, which would indicate 300 by 200 feet. There were two rings and a hippodrome track, and on that basis we would expect a 300 by 150 tent with about sixty quarter-poles.

Twenty men travelled a day ahead of the company to prepare the lot (two to three acres) and build the ring banks. Earthen rings were used with wooden stakes atop them from which canvas curtains about two feet high were suspended. As we said, there were two rings, the number first adopted in 1872, as a method of

crowd control. They were surrounded by a hippodrome track on which spectacles and races were held. The Barnum show may have been the first to utilize such a layout. The Great Eastern in 1872 claimed the first two-ring circus, but theirs was constructed of two connected center-pole tents.

The performance in this vast canvas show house was one the largest programs seen to that time. There were sixteen changes, all but three of them involving both rings, plus acts that appeared on the track. Thus, though fifteen or sixteen separate acts had been the industry norm for twenty years, with Barnum this number was doubled in both 1872 and 1873.

Fritz Hartman's orchestra provided an overture, followed by the Grand Hippodrome Entree, a spectacle called "The Halt in the Desert." This was the fourth straight season that Coup and Castello had begun a program with this theme. Their 1870 circus had used it, and the Barnum shows of 1871, 1872, and 1873 did as well.

The "Human Curiosities" then paraded around the hippodrome track. These people were separate from the Museum Department, as it was known. Nor were they attached to the side show operated by the Bunnell Brothers. Exhibited by S. S. Smith, the group consisted of the midget Admiral Dot; Charles Tripp, the armless boy; "Zip" (William H. Jackson) the "What is it?"; Zaluma Agra, a Circassian lady; and the Fiji Cannibals. The Fiji Islanders were one of the first ethnological exhibits to appear in a circus in America; Barnum & Bailey made much use of such groups. These had appeared first in Barnum's Museum, and were with the circus in 1872.

The rest of the program, by ring number, went in this order:

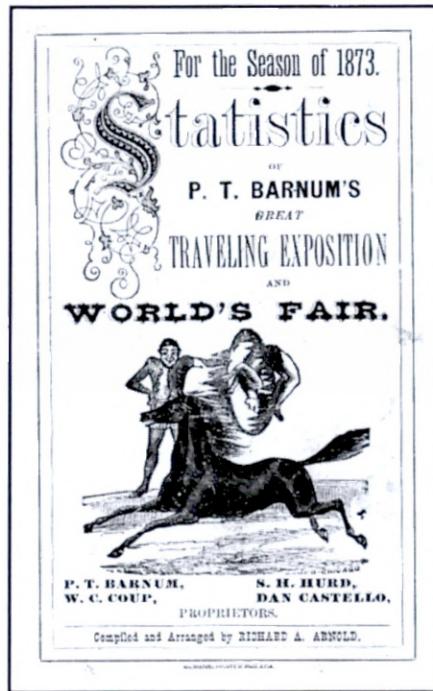
- Ring One Triple bar act
- Ring Two The Bushnell's wire act
- Ring One Romeo Sebastian, pad riding
- Ring Two Dave Castello, bareback riding
- Ring One Mathews Family, trapeze
- Ring Two Lazelle & Milson, brother act
- Ring One Sig. Sebastian, trick horse
- Ring Two Dan Castello, trick

Ring Two Dan Castello, trick horse
 Vaulting and tumbling corps.
 Alexis, the riding goat
 Ring One Messenger, cannon ball act
 Ring Two D'Atalie, iron jaw
 Ring One Lucille Watson, principal act
 Ring Two Helen Cooke, principal act
 Ring One Elephant "Gypsy"
 Ring Two Elephant "Betsey"
 Jerry Hopper, stilt act
 Ring One Dave Castello, scenic act
 Ring Two George North, scenic act
 Ring One Ladder act
 Ring Two Lazelle & Milson, trapeze
 Ring One Sig, Sebastian, bareback act
 Ring Two Frank Barry, bareback riding
 Comic Scene, "Jockey and Trainer"
 Concert by the Alabama Slave Minstrels

This is the program that appeared in the route book, published by one Richard A. Arnold, who had also published the 1872 book. He appears to have left out a number of equestrians, and we would conjecture that what he did was to ignore the acts that appeared on the hippodrome track. As an example, Philo Nathans was listed in the roster as a four-and-six horse rider, but no such act is in the above program. Perhaps Arnold was unable to find a satisfactory method of including these acts, or he might have been limited to a certain number of pages by management.

Clowns still worked in the acts, rather than by themselves. Gus Lee, Walter Aymar, Jerry Hopper, George Mathews and Jerry Mathews were the five Barnum clowns. Frank Whittaker was the equestrian director, Horace Nichols, the ringmaster; "Doc" James Thayer was the head ticket-taker, and these three old-timers must have spent many hours in reminiscence of their wag-on show days.

The performers worked ten to fifteen minutes (compared to a modern show's limit of about eight). The three-hour show cost fifty cents for adults, seventy-five for reserved seats. Children paid twenty-five cents. A purchaser of Barnum's autobiography at \$1.50 (reduced from \$3 in 1872) received a free ticket. That the audience got their money's worth seems obvious. Sig. Se-



Cover of the 1873 P. T. Barnum route book. Pfening Archives.

bastian, Lucille Watson and Frank Barry were all true stars of the ring. The Mathews Family, eight acrobats, were newly arrived from England, where their work had been well received. The D'Atalies were a top strength act from France. The Bushnells, man and wife, were almost always mentioned in reviews. They juggled, but also presented an impalement act in which Mrs. Bushnell let her husband throw knives and axes at her.

The Castellos, the Bushnells, George North, and Lazelle & Milson were repeating their 1872 appearances on the program. James Melville, the leading rider in the previous two seasons, was gone, and his absence was the greatest difference between this season and 1872. Comparisons of the programs of the leading (in size) circuses of that season do not reveal an overwhelming difference in the talent presented. Barnum, of course, had the edge in numbers. Where the Barnum effort had a decided advantage was in his museum, which was a miniature version of his former permanent exhibition in New York. Under the direction of W. L. Jukes, the great constructor of automata, this department mirrored the intense nineteenth-century public interest in machinery carried to rather absurd heights. There was Professor Faber's talking machine (a woman's disembodied head which seemed to speak); "busy city" table-

aus of Jupiter's palace, a Louis XVI hunting scene, the siege of Paris, the games of Olympus and the like. A portrait gallery of American presidents, and internationally famous men (not a single woman) was featured. A large group of "Rogers' Figures," as they're now called, was included. There were automaton bell ringers, a grotto of Calypso, the garden of the Hesperides, five hundred stuffed birds, some of which sang. All this was probably worth the fifty-cent show ticket, not to mention the menagerie and the hippodrome.

The "Living Curiosities" we mentioned as appearing on the track at the beginning of the performance. They also occupied a separate tent (not to be confused with the Bunnell Brothers' side show), and this arrangement seems odd to us, for why should they be in two parts of the show? In addition to those we named above, there were Modoc and Digger Indians from California, and a seven-year-old bearded girl.

In the Bunnell's side show, a separate operation, were Colonel Routh Goshen, the "Arabian" giant, who was actually an African-American from Middlebush, New Jersey, seven feet, eleven inches tall, and 620 pounds in weight; Isaac Sprague, a living skeleton; Mme. Clark, a fat lady; two albino ladies, Ella Mann and Etta Rogers; and Maximo and Bartola, the famous Aztec children. It cost fifteen cents to see this group.

The menagerie was as extensive as any, and of the lacked only a hippopotamus greater prizes. Barnum had lost four giraffes in the Hippotheatron fire, and secured two replacements, one of which was kept in reserve in Bridgeport against further loss. The rhinoceros had survived because he was with the Older circus at the time of the fire. This animal had been imported in 1871, and would survive to the end of the 1873 road season. There were four elephants, two of which, Gypsy and Betsey, performed. The caged animals occupied nearly thirty wagons. The show advertised fifty, but about twenty of these were museum wagons, mainly stuffed birds. There were live birds, as well, from cassowaries to humming birds. There were the usual lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs, a polar bear, wart hog, tapir, sea lions, all the "world in tribute," as the Courier had it.

After Brooklyn, Coup loaded the company on the railroad, and began the touring season. As we know, 1872 was the first season in which a special train was used to haul a com-

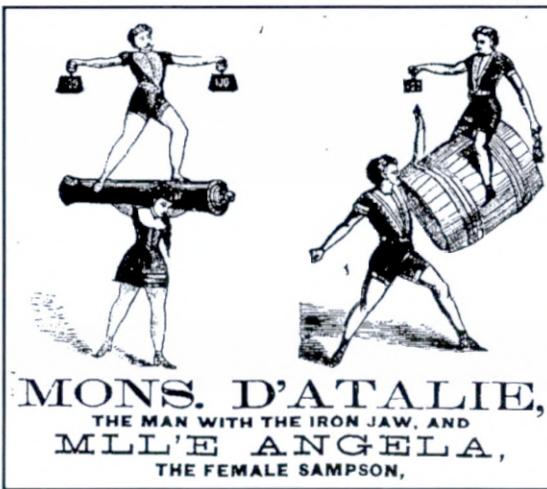
plete circus. Because they used leased equipment that first year, there were many problems since the cars were not uniform. Coup saw to it that the flatcars were replaced by show-owned equipment in 1873. The trains had sixty-two to sixty-five cars of which fifty were Barnum's, the rest leased. The variation in numbers had to do with the various sizes of the cars provided by the individual railroads. There were five sleeping cars and six passenger cars in the make-up.

The route took them into New England, across New York to Buffalo, through Ohio, into Indiana and Illinois, coming up to Chicago, the most western point they reached. They played Chicago for a week, then went into Michigan, across Ontario, down to Washington and Baltimore, and a week in Philadelphia. Another week in Brooklyn ended the tenting portion of the route. They opened in the new Hippodrome building on October 20.

In some cities, Philadelphia and Cleveland among them, wooden amphitheatres with canvas roofs were constructed, foretelling the pattern to be followed by the Roman Hippodrome of 1874 and 1875. In Buffalo, anticipating large crowds, the show built some kind of gallery that increased seating by 3,000; details of this construction are so meager it can't be described accurately. It is amazing that having increased the capacity by a third from the previous season, Coup now had to do even more.

The Hippodrome building, site of the later Madison Square Garden, was between Madison and 4th Avenue, 26th and 27th Streets. Coup had overseen the remodelling of the former New York & Harlem Railroad station which the circus leased. The company was there from October 20 to November 26, whereupon it moved into the American Institute building at Sixty-Third Street and Third Avenue. Capacity in this hall was 8,000 people.

All the important cities in the north were played. There were week-long stands in St. Louis, Chicago, Philadelphia and Brooklyn, ten days in Boston, and four-day stops in Cincinnati and Baltimore. There were three shows a day at 10 a.m., 1 p.m., and 7 p.m.



D'Atalie and Angela, iron jaw performers. Pfening Archives.

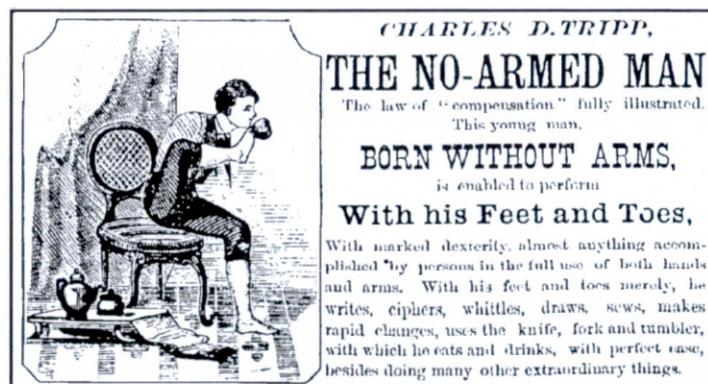
Thus, there were 515 performances, plus or minus, in 1873, and it appears that the average audience was near to 9,700, three times the capacity of most circuses. Barnum wrote the business manager of the *New York Tribune* that it took audiences of 8,000 per day to cover the expenses.⁴

The comments in the press were supportive of the show, which is interesting, since it wasn't a fact twenty years before, at the time of the Barnum Caravan. His endeavors over the years seem to have solidified his image as essentially a man of good-will, but one who, perhaps, advertised himself to extremes.

The *Hartford Courant* said, "There has been but one opinion expressed in Hartford about this monster combination. It is the universal expression that it more than fills public expectation. Surely nothing like it has ever before traveled through the country."⁵

The *Boston Globe* printed, "We can only reiterate that it is the great-

A young Charles Tripp appeared in the Bunnell side show in 1873. Pfening Archives.



est exhibition of the kind that has ever visited Boston. The success which has met Mr. Barnum's efforts to give the public an exhibition which should be free from the objections so often brought against shows of this kind is an evidence that he has hit the public taste."⁶

The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* pointed out that "Mr. Barnum has discovered the great secret of success. He has a remarkable show and he keeps it liberally advertised. Some people may think him extravagant, but "the proof of the pudding is in the eating," and his receipts, averaging ten thousand dollars a day, are an enduring proof of his wisdom in this particular."⁷

One unique addition to the lot layout was a 100 by 1 50-foot tent that was intended as a place for the public to rest while waiting for the performance to begin. Several cages of animals and a sideshow attraction or two were placed there, and no admission was charged. It closed when the front doors opened.

The operation was so efficient that only one performance was missed. This was the morning show in Lafayette, Indiana on July 30, and it was caused by a railroad accident ahead of the circus trains.

The parade in this season was enhanced by several additions, most of them being introduced for the first time on any circus. A band composed of black minstrels not white men in blackface-paraded on the street, and were the concert attraction in the main show. A "Harmonium," as it was called, twenty-four feet long and seven feet wide, was a musical instrument that must have been an imposing vehicle. Whatever its instrument was, it was worked with a small steam engine. The only word applied to musical chariots that a modern observer can grasp is "caliope." Words like "Harmonium," "Polyhymnia," and "Automatodean," tell us nothing, and, worse, do not distinguish between automatic machines and those operated by a person.

Barnum's parade had a Car of Juggernaut, and again we are not sure what it was. It might have referred to the Temple of Juno, the telescoping throne chariot that was introduced in 1871. The bandwagon in 1873 was still the Chariot

of Orpheus, and may have transported the minstrel band. A lion cage carried a band on the roof, at least such a combination was illustrated in the courier, which confirms the *Troy Times'* statement that there were two bands in the procession. Live bellringers rode on one of the museum wagons. All this enhancement of the parade can be credited to Howes' Great London Circus, which brought from England several truly innovative parade wagons that had no other use or purpose in 1871.

The Barnum parade took fifteen minutes to pass a given point, according to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* of 14 July. The order of march went: Grand chariot of Apollo bandwagon (formerly chariot of Orpheus) with twelve-camel hitch.

Group of mounted knights in glittering armor and plumed helmets.

Group of mounted maidens, richly clad.

Group of Shetland ponies with child riders.

Mounted group, ladies in white and Robin Hood riders in green.

Two purple and gold cages, two-horse hitches.

One large and three small elephants.

Large pink and silver lion cage, with automatodean on roof.

Twenty-nine cages, two-horse hitches.

The harmonium, or polhymnia.

A second group of cages.

Mammoth band car (identification unknown, possibly the lion cage).

Snake den (glass) with Hindu charmer inside.

Polar bear den.

Chariot of the Sun (not identified).

Museum chariots, mostly stuffed birds, with automatadia on roofs.

Temple of Juno, thirty-feet high.⁸

There were three deaths in the

The Chariot of Orpheus bandwagon as illustrated in the 1873 courier. Pfening Archives.



The Great Street Pageant,

Which heralds the advent into each town of the longest and GRANDEST SPECTACULAR DEMONSTRATION ever witnessed, in any age or country, is believed by the management to extend when the entire retinue is brought into regulation, and not too compactly arranged.

NEARLY THREE MILES IN LENGTH.

Prominent among the grand and attractive features of the *Innumerable Caravan*, are the 12 GOLDEN CHARIOTS, 8 Statuary and 4 Tableau, including the

George Moving Temple of Juno,

30 feet high, built in London, at a cost of \$20,000.

THE MUSICAL CHARIOT OF MNEMOSYNE,

THE REVOLVING TEMPLE OF THE MUSES.

The Great Steam Calliope,

THREE BANDS OF MUSIC, and

ONE HUNDRED RESPLENDENT CAGES AND VANS.

The Temple of Juno tableau as illustrated in the 1873 courier. Pfening Archives.

company during the season. Edward D'Atalie, the thirty-three year-old "Man with the Iron Jaw," died in Fall River, Massachusetts on May 9, from an undisclosed illness. He was not what is called an iron jaw performer today, that is, one who hangs by his teeth. D'Atalie lifted heavy objects by means of his mouth. His wife, Angela, performed with him, doing an act in which she fired a cannon from her shoulder. She continued this specialty in America for some years. On July 15, Charles Johnson, a property man, died in Cleveland, from a stroke. A canvasman, George Lynch, was killed when run over by a stake wagon in St. Louis on August 3.

The Barnum aggregation in 1873 was truly the greatest show on earth, in size, sales, income, and efficiency. Nothing like it had been offered the public in any prior season, and the public came to see it in droves. In Boston, in spite of a nine-day exposure, hundreds were turned away at each performance. Ticket sales

were five times what they had been in 1872 (five million versus one million), and the profit was three times that of the previous year, \$750,000 versus \$280,000--these are obviously round numbers. The increases were partly because of the increase in seating from 10,000 to nearly 14,000, and partly because the route encompassed more large cities. In addition, it must be noted that 1872 was not a good year in the entertainment business. Under Coup's management the gross income had expanded two and a half times in 1872, and fifty per-cent above that in 1873 (\$1.5 million versus \$1 million).

The *Indianapolis News* editorialized on July 29: "Barnum fools everybody for everybody is so accustomed to seeing big shows on the bulletin boards and small ones under canvas, that the opposite course astonishes and fools them."

With this reputation, and the great success that this season provided, it seems strange that the format of the traditional circus was abandoned the following two seasons. Barnum was abroad for the last quarter of 1873, and, according to Saxon, the showman's chief biographer, had gathered many suggestions that were put into the Hippodrome presentation of 1874 and 1875. He had apparently had a long-cherished plan to exhibit a Roman Hippodrome, Zoological Institute, Aquaria, and Museum.⁹

It can only add to Barnum's place as the consummate showman that he would, after the most successful season, in terms of magnitude, of any circus in history, go in another direction. Further, it delineates him as being able to see beyond the circus, and to encompass spectacle for its own sake.

Notes

1. Arthur H. Saxon, *P. T. Barnum, The Legend and the Man* (Columbia University, New York, 1989), p. 244.

2. P. T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs* (Warren, Johnson & Co., Buffalo, 1872), p. 244.

3. *Barnum's Advance Courier*, 1873.

4. Letter, Barnum to Gordon L. Ford, 24 April 1873, in Arthur H. Saxon, ed., *Selected Letters of P. T. Barnum* (Columbia University, New York, 1983), p. 175.

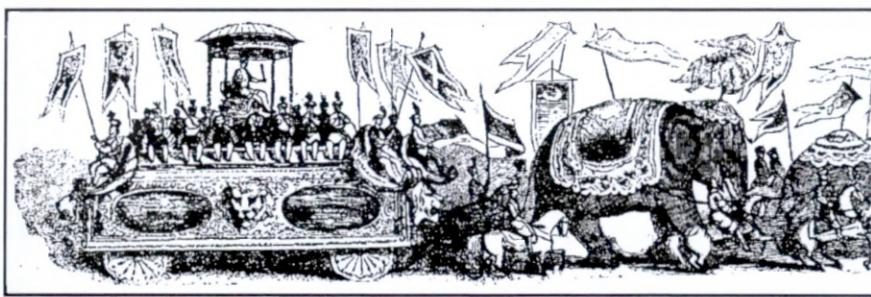
5. *Hartford Courant*, 30 April 1873.

6. *Boston Globe*, 22 May 1873.

7. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 16 July 1873.

8. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated News*, 12 July 1873.

9. Saxon, *P. T. Barnum*, p. 246.



George Arstingstall

George Arstingstall, along with Stuart Craven and George Conklin, was an early dean of American circus elephant trainers. Born and educated in Marietta, Virginia, his first circus was Dan Rice's just before the Civil War where he began the training of animals. He joined the Mike Lipman Circus in 1866 where he found himself handling a sacred bull that had already killed a former trainer.

He took up the hot air balloon end of the business and began to make ascensions. After falling 68 feet while making an ascension in Portsmouth, Ohio he returned to circus animals. Arstingstall then went to Europe where he trained a number of different wild animals. His specialty was elephants.

Back in the United States in the middle 1870s he joined the Cooper & Bailey Circus. In 1879 and 1880 he was superintendent of elephants. Arstingstall is credited with breeding Mandarin and Hebe, resulting in the birth of Columbia on March 10, 1880, in the Cooper & Bailey Philadelphia winter quarters. The baby was first named Young America and some early photos of mother and baby have that name. A special railroad car was built to carry them.

In 1881 Arstingstall was the elephant trainer on Barnum & London Circus, working for the same management as the company was the result of the combination of the Barnum show and Cooper and Bailey. He bred Queen with Chief resulting in the birth of Baby Bridgeport on February 2, 1882. Baby Bridgeport died on April 12, 1886. Arstingstall had hoped for a third baby 1883 but Chief was bred to several females without success.

On April 5, 1883 while Arstingstall was Barnum & London's superintendent of elephants the bull Pilot was executed. The April 17, 1883 New York Times reported: "He is a hopeless case," said Mr. Bailey, "and it is really dangerous to keep him about any longer."

"Accordingly, Col. Arstingstall procured a large navy revolver carrying a .48 caliber ball. He approached the head of the elephant, which was secured to a stanchion, and the beast made a desperate and savage attempt to break loose, and reach him. Arstingstall placed the muzzle of the revolver close to Pilot's breast, between the front legs, and pulled the trigger. The brute

CIRCUS WILD ANIMAL TRAINERS

GEORGE ARSTINGSTALL and GEORGE BATES

BY BILL JOHNSTON

never flinched. Then Arstingstall shot him again in the same place, and again under the left eye, and Pilot died without any further struggle, and his bright spirit fled.

"The other elephants maintained their usual composure, with the exception of Gypsy, who had been Pilot's companion for several years. She refused to be comforted, and ate nothing all day yesterday, and her grief was really pathetic."

A report in the February 19, 1887 New York *Clipper* stated: "George Arstingstall, the elephant trainer, was found by a Bridgeport, Connecticut policeman a night or two ago between the rails on the railroad track. When asked what he was doing he answered: 'Wait a few moments, and it will all be over.' He was waiting for the approaching express. He had previously announced that he had lived long enough.

"With some difficulty he was taken to the police station, and after he became quiet he was sent home. Prof.

George Arstingstall, an early circus elephant trainer. Circus World Museum collection.



Arstingstall has never been quite himself since the death of Jumbo. The elephant's tragic death completely upset him, and shortly afterward he resigned from the show. Trouble growing out of an affair of the heart is said to be largely the cause of his unfortunate condition." The next week the *Clipper* published a denial from him.

Resigning from the Barnum show, he sailed for Hamburg, Germany on April 2, 1887, according to the April 9 *Clipper*, to train animals for the Hagenbeck Zoo and perhaps contract for a couple of elephants to be shipped to America. He came back to the United States after a few months in Germany, but then returned to Hamburg on January 26, 1888.

The February 13, 1892 New York *Clipper* reported: "George Arstingstall, after seven (sic) years in Europe, arrived from England on February 7. He joined the Adam Forepaugh Circus as superintendent of the fourteen elephants."

An 1893 Washington D. C., newspaper reported: "The first event of the [Forepaugh] performance is a novelty this year, and consists of a big iron barred coral, set up in the midst of the main tent, in which a happy family of two American panthers, two Asiatic leopards, two lions with a pair of huge dogs, a Dane and a mastiff, and a small black bear, all go through a concerted drill under the direction of Albert Stadler, a nervy little black-haired Swede, who handles his big pets like kittens. The group of animals was trained within the past two months by Mr. Arstingstall, the premier elephant trainer of the country, and they do credit to their instructor. It was the first time that the animals had ever been put through their paces, except on a board floor, and they were a little nervous when turned into the big cage on the ground. One of the leopards particularly was inclined to make things interesting, and half a dozen times threw herself back, cat-like, with a vicious spit, and struck at her keeper, who coolly returned the attention with a flick of the training whip across the open jaws and the show went merrily on. The animals built pyramids of themselves, and two of the lions seesawed on a long board across a trestle, while Stadler beat time for them with his whip."

The 1893 Forepaugh route book reported an article about Arstingstall

from the St. Louis *Chronicle*: "The elephant tamer sat on his sheet-iron trunk, his legs crossed, his crushed hat pounded to the flatness of a gridle cake in his lap.

"He was buttoned to the chin in a blue tunic, and a pair of patent leather-top boots reflected the gold of a sunbeam that shot diagonally through a rift in the dressing-room tent.

"An eye, brown and piercing, has this elephant tamer, whose hair is as black as a stroke from Rembrandt's brush, and whose intensely black mustache is dappled with the silver that the grim old satirist, Father Time, brings.

"George Arstingstall is his name, Marietta, Virginia, the place of his nativity.

"For thirty-three years has George Arstingstall's life hung on a thread between an existence and a tragedy. For he has faced the terrors of brutal passions that throb in the breasts of the fiends of jungle and forest. The mastery of his valiant soul has conquered all these brutalities.

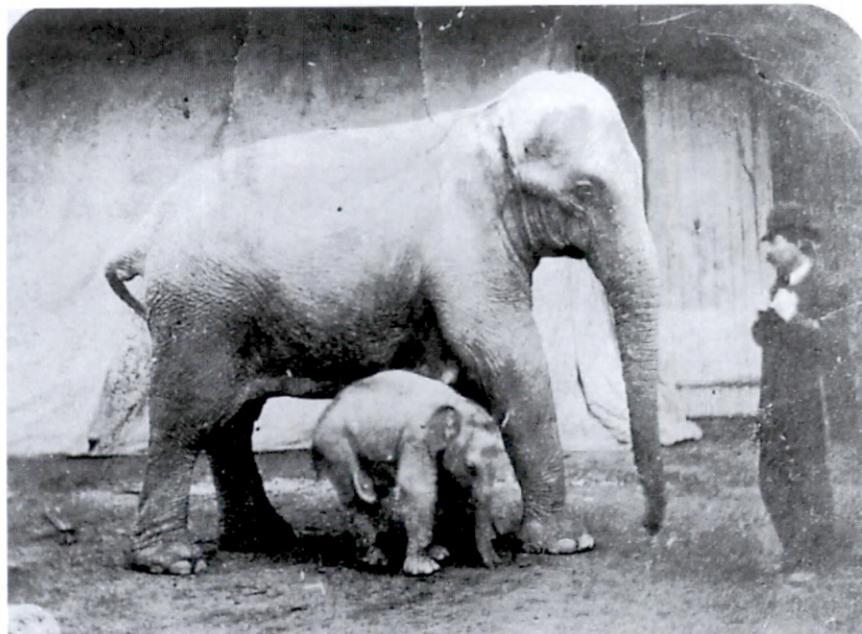
"Proficients in the arts, in literature and the sciences, among the whole range of their lives become heroes in the histories, but never an award of praise beyond the ephemeral hand clap and applause of a multitude gathered in the white tents is given the trainer of brutes, who in most instances sacrifices his life for his profession and is, after all, the only true naturalist.

"We have essays from naturalists who tell us of the traits of the brute instinct and their names and works become pages in our history.

"But are they more wonderful than naturalists who are more true, than the tamer who studies and conquers the brutal nature?

"Mr. Arstingstall is the greatest of animal trainers. He received a common school education at Marietta, Virginia. Though he has made the circuit of the earth, has trained and exhibited his lions, panthers and elephants from San Francisco to Boston, from London to St. Petersburg; though he speaks six tongues, he still retains the accent of Virginia—the 'er recon' and 'right smart' that proclaim the Southerner directly he opens his mouth.

"Just before the [civil] war,' said Mr. Arstingstall, 'I went with Dan Rice's show, hiring out as an animal tamer. I inherited a love for the brute kingdom from some one in my family. I know I didn't get it from my father or mother. Rice had pur-



Arstingstall, Cooper & Bailey menagerie superintendent, with mother Hebe and baby Columbia. Pfening Archives.

chased from Grizzly Adams a troop of trained bears.

"This was a lucky stroke for me, as I knew absolutely nothing about training animals. But I went on with the tricks the bears knew and Rice said I was competent.

"When I was with Rice I read an advertisement in a Cincinnati paper from a man named Lipman, who ran a circus. Lipman wanted a man to exhibit his sacred bull. I answered his advertisement; he accepted my terms and I quit Rice and went to Lipman. There I found myself in a perplexing position. Lipman's sacred bull had killed his trainer, a man named Thompson. This happened in St. Louis and I have no doubt that some of the old residents of St. Louis will remember it. But I preferred taking the sacred bull at a good salary than to going broke, and I made a hit with the animal. This I discovered about the bull. If he becomes mad and rushes for you, just step aside and you will be saved, for the bull closes his eyes when he is in anger and rushes pell-mell.

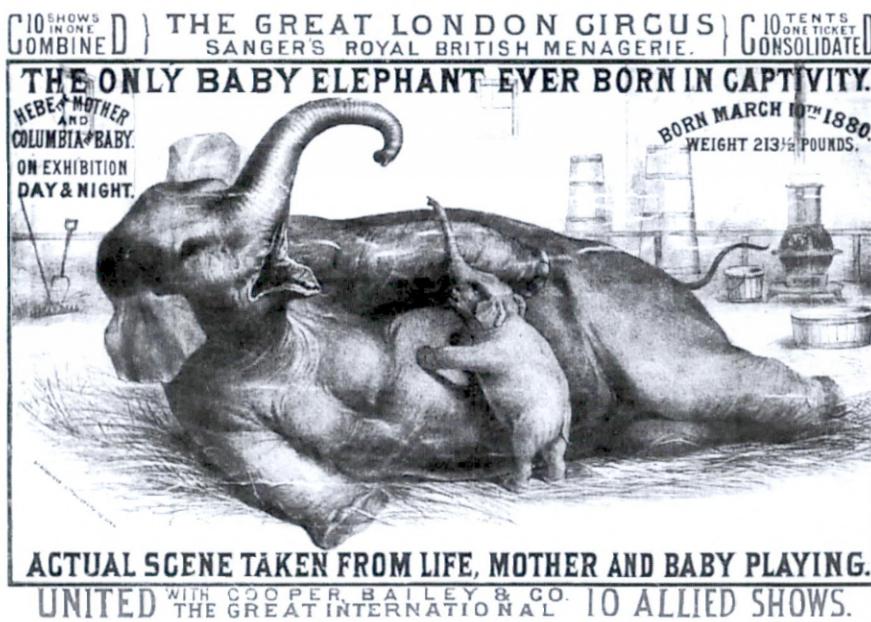
"After a few years experience I went to Europe and toured it, training lions, tigers, panthers, hyena, hippopotami and the domesticated animals, such as dogs, cats and white mice. But my specialty, if I have any, is the elephant. We have this year with the Forepaugh show ten performing elephants. They are Bazel, Modoc, Topsy, Bess, Rubber, Betsey,

Dick, John L. Sullivan, George and Babe. Then there is Baby Ruth our 2-year old. Ruth goes to school to me next winter. Ruth is a domesticated elephant and she will prove hard to train.

"Perhaps you would think that the domesticated elephant is easier to train than the savage elephant. But I prefer to train the elephant first from the jungle. When an elephant has been fondled with the circus hands before it is trained it becomes stubborn when you try to break it in, and is ugly and sullen when you approach it with the intention of making it work. When I am given an elephant fresh from the jungle to break in, I fasten it to a stake in the center of the ring. Then I arm myself with a huge whip, approach my pupil, pat him on the head, walk away and beckon him to follow me. If they get obstinate and run at me I get out of harm's way. They run till they are pulled up by the chain which allows them to run as far as the ring-side. Grouped around the ring is an army of circus hands who lash my elephant. Then the elephant retreats to his stake and looks to me as a friend. He begins to get confidence in me.

"I become their friend, their protector. When this stage is reached they are mine. I broke the first clown elephant that ever entered the sawdust ring. Adonis was his name.

"In breaking an elephant into tricks such as playing a hand organ or drinking from a bottle, I place his trunk in the positions. After an hour or so of practice it begins to dawn on him what I expect of him, and once



he solves this problem he never forgets it. I reward each of his feats with a pint of turnip or of carrots. He looks for this reward, and tries his best to understand me. Then I break him into tricks more difficult, and when I reach this stage the hard work begins, for I take his reward of turnips and carrots away from him, and he rebels at once. He strikes on me and refuses to work.

"One of the most difficult feats is to make the elephant become an adept in standing on his hind legs. This is an awful task and you can't reward them by feeding them to make them accomplish it. I have had elephants rebel for two weeks against this hind-leg act, but I have beaten and coaxed them into submission.

"The female elephant has a kindlier disposition than the male. One peculiar thing about training the elephant is that I call the trained female elephant into service as a reinforcement. When the elephant I am training becomes contrary the female elephant that I enlist in my service whips him with her trunk, and the untrained monster, seeing that I have the majority in my favor, submits to my will.

"Though the female is harder to train she is more friendly, and the older the male gets the more vicious he becomes. The elephant is the most intelligent of all the constructions of organism that do not possess the power of speech, and I will not except the horse or the dog that we generally claim are more intelligent than any of the brute creation.

Cooper & Bailey lithograph of Hebe and Columbia used in 1880. Pfening Archives.

"Though my experience as an elephant trainer has been greater than any living man, I see every day new traits, new features of the elephant's intelligence that startle me, and if I live to an old age, I will, I really think, place this tremendous monster on a par with the human creation, bar the great and crowning power of speech. I have seen elephants at their meals side by side. One with the longer trunk would reach out and eat the fare of the elephant who stood side of him with a shorter trunk. The unfortunate beast with the short trunk would strive to reach his next door neighbor's meal but he couldn't make it. Isn't this a cute subtle quality of selfishness to obvious in the human race.

"Of course a man takes his life in his hand and values it cheap in my business. Most of us get it, and get it to the death in my business. I escaped death by a scratch with the Forepaugh show at Scranton, Pennsylvania. Charley was the elephant's name, and an ugly beggar he was. My men were at breakfast, and Charley was chained up to Modoc, who is still with the Forepaugh show. Charley was an ugly brute, and as I passed him after lining him up with the rest he turned and struck me with his trunk. I fell on my back fifteen feet away. Before I could regain my feet he was on me, seizing me with his trunk again and giving me another toss. Again he rushed for me and gave me still another toss, my

body grazing his tusks as he tossed me. Before he got a chance to trample on me I crawled away and was saved. It was a lucky escape. If I come so close again I will pray.

"In 1868 I had a narrow escape from death. I was with Buckley's circus then, and was in charge of a menagerie bound from New York to Delavan, Wisconsin. It was the fall of the year, and a cold streak struck us going over the Allegheny Mountains. We halted at Altoona, Pennsylvania, and I gave the elephants a bucket of whisky each. Whisky is a necessity for the elephant when exposed to cold weather. The ugliest of my tribe was stimulated to an ugly temper by the whisky, and he thrust the other elephants and camels aside and made for me. I was seated near the stove at the end of the car. Before I could avoid him he struck me with his tusk. My assistants in the car were powerless. They couldn't reach the spear which hung at the top of the car. I dodged around the car between the other intensive camels and elephants, and for an hour he was after me. The train was moving at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour and my assistants in the car were so frightened and crazy that they couldn't give the engineer the signal to stop the train. By some means or other I climbed on a camel, seized a spear, nailed it through the trunk of the brute and the point of the spear entered the side of the car I got another spear from the armory at the roof of the car, and punched that elephant's trunk full of holes. Albert was his name. He killed my assistant, James Sweeney, at Nashua, New Hampshire in 1885. The oldest elephant in America is with the Forepaugh show. Her name is Bazel. She came to America in 1830, having been imported by the Sands & Nathan show. Bazel is at least 76 years old. Her original name was Jennie. I have known her for thirty years and she knows me, no matter where I meet her. She is the largest elephant with the Forepaugh show."

Arstingstall retired from the circus business following the close of the 1894 Forepaugh season.

The August 3, 1895 New York *Clipper* reported Arstingstall was importing animals for the firm DeSilva and Gaylord. An advertisement in the August 8, 1895 *Clipper* said he was to arrive in New York with a large consignment of animals for DeSilva and Gaylord including elephants, rare birds, goats, black monkeys, black gibbons, tigers and a monster python, 20 to 30 feet long.

On April 2, 1896 the Detroit *News-Tribune* published an article about Arstingstall: "George Arstingstall, veteran elephant man and keeper of the late Jumbo, is the man who is in charge of the dwarf elephant and Kedah, the sacred white elephant now on exhibition at Wonderland.

"The veteran trainer is over 55 years of age. He doesn't look it, within 10 or 15 years. That is because he takes things easy and does not let the half dozen times he has come within an ace of being tossed into eternity worry him at all." The white elephant mentioned above was exhibited on Ringling Bros. in 1897 and 1898.

The January 13, 1923 *Billboard* reported that Arstingstall ran the maze ride at Sea Beach, Coney Island in 1899.

Arstingstall died in Leachdale, Pennsylvania on February 11, 1904.

George M. Bates

George M. Bates was born in 1851 in Natick, Massachusetts. He journeyed to Bridgeport, Connecticut to join the Barnum and London Circus in 1882. The 1885 Barnum and London route book lists him as an elephant keeper. The show had thirty elephants that season. In later life often told of working for P. T. Barnum and having been around Jumbo.

An extensive letter from Bates appeared in the September 15, 1923 *Billboard*: "Perhaps my most striking recollection is of the death of Jumbo, killed in St. Thomas, Ontario in 1885. I was present and remember every detail.

"Our show lot adjoined the railroad. The cage train, with the elephant and camel cars, was on a side track. An opening had been left between the flats and the box cars for the elephants and camels to pass through to the cars which had to be loaded on the main track. We had started to load, with all the train crew watching us. The cages had been loaded and Don Watson and I had old Gypsy and Queen, who went to the white elephant car. As we were going up the mail track we saw the headlight of an engine, but we hadn't the slightest idea that it would come down on us with the railroad crew all on hand.

"But we could see that it was rapidly approaching. Jumbo and the baby were behind us. On the right there was a very steep bank and a high signal wire, which ran from the depot to the switch, and we could

not herd our charges across it. So the flag staff on the engine hit old Gyp first and threw her against Queen and they both went down back into the mud. It took an hour to get them out.

"Jumbo had turned to run back to the opening and would have been saved had he reached it. The engine first struck the baby, which was behind him, and broke her hind leg. Then it struck Jumbo just as he got to the opening and set him on his hind legs under the flat car. His head hit the iron rail on top of the car, crushing his skull and breaking one of his tusks. The impact derailed the engine and three heavy freight cars.

"The baby was sent back to Bridgeport and the leg was put in a plaster mold and came around all right. I saw her when we were in Olympia, in London, in 1889 and she had a lot of pep. But her leg was quite stiff and she was lame. She was a clown elephant and Bill Conrad worked her.

George Bates, chief elephant keeper, as pictured in the 1897-1901 Barnum & Bailey route book. Pfening Archives.

"Prof. Ward, of Rochester, New York, stuffed Jumbo's hide and fixed the skeleton so that it could be set up and taken down every day. The hide was on a large platform truck, which could be raised and lowered, and the car had a cellar in it, into which the form was lowered. This construction was necessary because Jumbo stood eleven and a half feet high, weighed nearly seven tons, and his car weighed 44,000 pounds. We had the entire outfit weighed at Ottawa, Canada. The car was twelve feet high inside, and in some places in West Virginia and Kentucky had to be left behind for the show to come back to because it could not be taken through the tunnels. Both the hide and the skeleton were taken to London with us.

"I never knew how the settlement was made with the Grand Trunk [railroad] for the accident, but I do know the matter was taken to court. I heard that the final settlement in-

volved a sum of money and the railroad had to haul the circus free of charge for ten years.

"Mr. Bailey left the show this same year, 1885, and did not return until 1887. George Arstingstall did likewise. Arstingstall bred the first elephant in this country. It was named Columbia and was born in Philadelphia in 1880. The Cooper & Bailey Circus had just returned from Australia [two years previously], and Mr. Barnum offered a large sum of money for this baby, but they would not sell. The second baby elephant born in captivity was to Old Queen at Bridgeport and it was named after city. It lived only two years (sic) and I believe it is now in the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport.

"In 1881 the Barnum and Cooper & Bailey show merged. Jumbo was brought over the following year. That was the year I joined the show."

In 1890 William Newman was elephant superintendent and he took Bates under his wing, teaching him the basics of elephant training. Bates worked the bull act in ring three which he continued to present through the 1899 tour.

The Barnum & Bailey Circus was involved in a wreck in Potsdam, New York on August 28, 1891. The Bates letter said: "I have been in a number of wrecks, but fortunately was never hurt. A disastrous one occurred once when we were going out of Gouverneur, New York. We had only given one performance. The train got as far as Potsdam when the hind truck of the elephant car broke. The body of the car rode the rails for a long way before the engineer knew of it and made a stop. Of course, it piled up the camel car and two stock cars. Two camels and more than thirty horses were killed. All the Arabian horses were killed. One stock car mounted another and went clear through it, taking both sides and top off killing every horse in it. I was asleep in my car at the time."

Bates' *Billboard* letter continues: "We went across the water twice. On the first trip we showed from November 11, 1889 to February 15, 1890 in the Olympia, London, and the second time over we were gone five years and I had charge of the el-



ephants most of the time. The first voyage was made on the *Furnesia* of the Anchor Line and took eleven days to England.

"We unloaded at the Royal Albert Docks and had a fourteen mile walk to Olympia. Mr. Barnum and Mr. Gladstone were together a great deal and had a big supper on the boat before we sailed. We came back on the same steamer.

"The second time we went over on the *Massachusetts*, of the Atlantic Transportation Line. We came back on the *Minneapolis*, a new ship making her first trip. We sailed from Dunkirk, France and came over in seven days.

"The show had winter quarters in Stoke on Trent and had some cars built there. We showed three winters in the Olympia and one winter in Vienna, Austria and one winter in Paris, France, where we were located in a building not far from the Big Wheel and the Eiffel Tower.

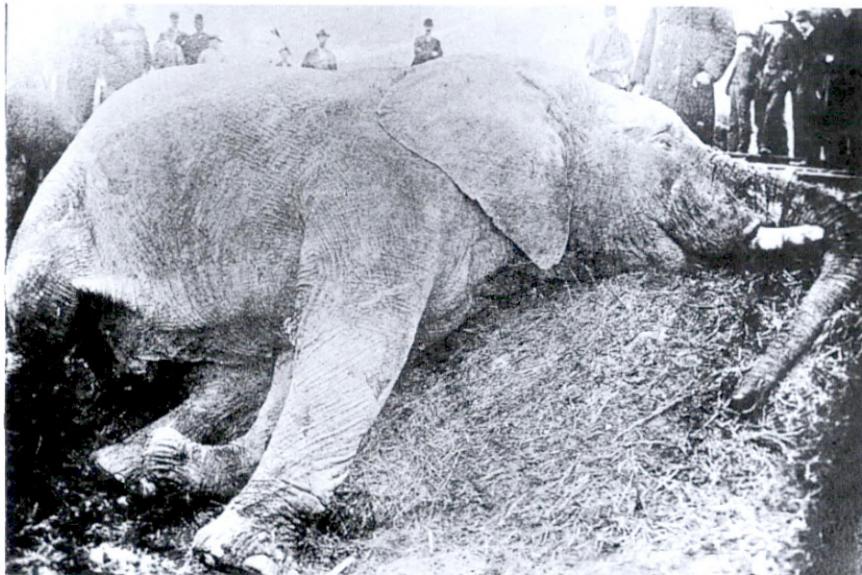
"As I remember we were in Germany when the Kaiser's mother died. We could not show for four or five days after she was buried. The Kaiser used to ride by on horseback while we were in Berlin. We were there three weeks. No doubt he got some pointers on loading the big guns and larger field pieces on cars for transportation by watching our show load and unload.

"Our itinerary included England, Scotland, Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Poland, Holland, Hungary, Galicia, Bohemia and the borders of Russia. We could not enter Russia, for the railroad gauge was wider than ours.

"We made the trip from London to Hamburg on the *Massachusetts* in three days I believe and took all the cars and sleepers along with us. We unloaded on the dock at Hamburg, where the big derrick which was used to load and unload the big Krupp guns. It lifted 130 tons and hoisted the elephant cars, elephants and all, and set them down on the railroad tracks."

In 1901 Bates was listed in the route book as chief elephant keeper. In 1903 when the circus returned to the United States he was first assistant. In 1906 he was made superintendent of the Barnum bulls. His friend George Denman was assistant superintendent. From 1903 to 1906 Bates presented the elephants in ring one.

The September 15, 1923 *Billboard* contained an article by Bates titled "Bad Bulls I Have Known" in which he said, "Mandarin was the worst el-



Bates was present when Jumbo was killed in St. Thomas, Ontario in 1885. Pfening Archives.

ephant that was ever brought to this country. He would fairly eat a man alive. He killed a man named George Stevens in the Olympia, London, and sent one to the hospital in Lynchburg, Va. We were lined up on the lot in Lynchburg, giving only one show there, and were waiting for the men to come back from supper. The unfortunate fellow went to drive Mandarin back into line, but Mandarin knocked him down and would have killed him but for Bill Newman, who had charge of the elephants, and got the man out from under him. He also knocked Bill Winters . . . thru the doors in Madison Square Garden and almost killed a little German lad I had helping with elephants in Vienna, Austria. . . . Poor old Gyp, who at the time had a paralyzed trunk, broke her chain at this and in turn knocked Mandarin down. Mandarin was bad tempered when we left Paris and remained so all summer.

"One day, while we were showing Portland, Me., I started for the cook-house and was almost there when I heard a noise from the menagerie. I ran back to find one of Harry Myers' feet in his [Mandarin's] mouth. He hurt it severely. As a result of this incident Mr. Bailey had Mandarin killed on the boat when we arrived at New York. He was put in a box as were all the big elephants that were killed, and the box was weighted down with five or six tons of old chain and placed on an old scow. A lighter tender towed the scow down to the vicinity of Sandy Hook, and there it was sunk. I suggested to Mr.

Bailey that we take him to Bridgeport by flat car, but he said that the box was too high for the bridges.

"It was in Nashua, New Hampshire [on July 18, 1885] that William [James] Sweeney was fatally attacked by Albert, another bad elephant. We went there from Manchester which was Sweeney's home. George Arstingstall had told Sweeney that he could have a day off at Manchester and also stay a second day.

"Albert, the elephant that killed Sweeney, had a martingale with a chain over his back, which passed between his front legs and was fastened to his tusks to keep his head down and prevent him from fighting. Sweeney had to loosen this chain so Bill Newman could ride him out to the ring. I was outside with the other four elephants with which Newman had finished. When Sweeney had taken off the chains Albert downed him and jabbed him with his tusks, and then ran by me and down town. George [Arstingstall] got his horse and went after him and brought him back. Albert had been after Sweeney for a year. He had downed Sweeney in Belfast, Me. [on July 2] and rolled him out under the side wall trying to get his tusks through him.

"From Nashua we went to Keene, N. H. Poor Sweeney did not think his hurt was much. But on the way he had to get up in the car [sleeper] about 3 in the morning, and before we got into Keene he died. His body was sent to his home in Manchester. There was a funeral procession from the undertaker's to the depot, with the band and nearly all the show people in line. . . . Mr. Bailey was in New York at the time, but Mr. Hutchinson telegraphed him the



Bates rehearsing the Barnum elephant act in Germany. Pfening Archives.

news and he sent word back to have Albert killed. I made him lie down and swept him off before he was taken out to be shot. We had to chain him to four trees, hind and front legs, then George Arstingstall marked two rings on him with chalk to indicate the spots at which the men were to take aim. Eight militiamen were called out, four for the firing squad and four to be held in reserve. But he fell instantly and scarcely moved. He was cut up and the reporters had an elephant steak dinner. The hide was stuffed and sent to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. He was a large, fine animal, with fine tusks, and weighed five tons or more.

"Tip was another bad animal. . . . Tip was ill-tempered all summer. When I went on the act I had a new fellow with me and instructed him never to come in the ring unless I called for him. However, he came in one day and Tip made for him. I luckily got him and brought him back into the ring. It was my custom to put hay in the cars every night to keep the elephants from fighting. So I told this man never to pass in front of Tip with hay on his back. He did, however, and Tip made a dive for him, but missed, and his tusks came near puncturing the side of the car. His worst break was one day when we were in the West. We were getting ready for parade. William Emery was working the elephants then and George Conklin, the boss animal man, had charge of them. I was outside the canvas when I heard the racket. I rushed under the side wall and there was Emery down on the

ground in between Tip's legs and Tip on his knees and his tusks driven into the ground two feet or more. I had no hook with me, but grabbed a sledge and drove him off of Emery and chained him up. I had just saved Emery's life, and today he is one of the best elephant trainers in the business. After that I had to look after Tip all season, in and out of the cars. We had to have him killed in winter quarters.

"I used to work three males and three females in the ring and have seen the males get to fighting right in the ring while I was working them.

"And then there was Don, another bad one. He was the first clown elephant ever broken for that purpose, trained by George Arstingstall. William Conrad . . . worked him. One night in Manchester, England, [in May of 1899] Mr. Bailey stood on the bank of the show lot and watched us trying to load him. Bill Newman had the elephants then. We had about fifty men or more on a rope around his neck and got him into the car. But he broke loose. . . . When we got him in again in the same manner, just up to the door, we took Gyp and pushed Don up in where I chained him. And then one day in the menagerie he chased one of the men, and the only thing that saved him was crawling under the freak stage. So Mr. Bailey had him killed in the menagerie in Liverpool. Stakes were driven into the ground, and, with two blocks and a fall and a rope around his neck, and about forty men on each rope, we choked him to death.

"Nick, another elephant, got ill-tempered and was killed in the same way in Stoke-on-Trent the last day of the show there where we went into winter quarters. He tried to kill a

man in the car while being chained. Fritz, another bad one, was killed in Tours, France [on June 11, 1902]. He had made a break for me in the street while on the way to the cars. Then he ran down the street and got tangled up in some trees and fell down. He was killed in the same manner as Don and Nick, but I didn't see it. After he made his break for me Mr. McCaddon, Mr. Bailey's brother-in-law, who was in charge while Bailey was in America, told me to take the other elephants to the car and load them. I did so, and on the way back met some of the men who informed me that they had killed Fritz.

"We had to kill Columbia, the first baby elephant born in this country, in Bridgeport as she was very bad. She must have taken after her father, Mandarin, because Hebe, her mother, was a good animal. They changed Hebe's name to Babe when she went to the Barnum show. She was one of the prettiest elephants in the country and never really hurt anyone, except once. There were one or two men with me whom she never allowed to chain her unless I was around. She would not attempt to injure them, but pushed them away with her trunk. The one exception was in the case of a big Swede whom I hired in Michigan. He was behind her going to the lot one morning in Lansing, Mich., and Jim Clarke, who is now with the Barnum show, was with her, as he always took the lead. He told me that she acted very

Bates on Barnum and Bailey around 1904. Pfening Archives.

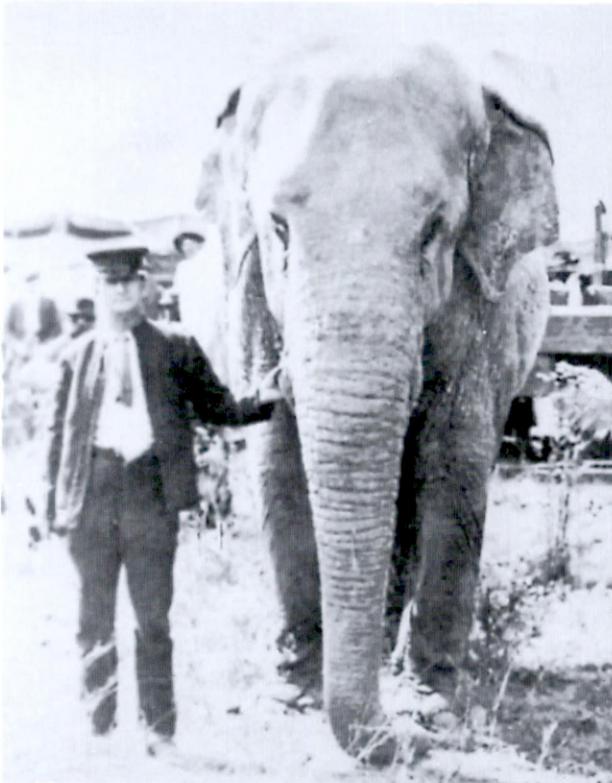


strangely all the way to the lot, as she kept turning around and looking at this Swede. So that afternoon as I was coming from supper, I entered her quarters and there she was with the Swede's hand in her mouth swinging him backward and forward. His head had hit an iron stake and he was covered with blood. Someone, who had seen the start of the thing, said he had put his hand in her mouth to give her a peanut. So I had to get his money for him and I never saw anymore of him. Even the best of them are not trustworthy.

"As to Columbia, one day in Bay City, Mich. I had gone to breakfast and Denham [Deafy Denman], who now has the Barnum elephants, took her out to push a wagon, which he had no business doing. I was told she knocked him down and but for a bale of hay would have killed him. She ran outside, followed by Hebe, her mother. I got her and chained her up. . . . They killed her while they were in winter quarters. She was placed in a corner with front and back legs chained, and they got a rope about her neck, with poles over Hattie's (another elephant) back. That was the only way they could get at her. I had contracted for another year with the show, but had gone home on vacation and they had given a fellow named [Harry] Mooney charge of the elephants during my absence. Had I known what they were up to I would have let her loose and no man in the business would have dared to go near her, for no one could handle her but myself.

"I have never been injured to speak of, except once, by an elephant. Four ran away on me and knocked me down and every one of them passed over me. This was in London. . . . We had a small elephant named Albert, about 15 years old. Wagner's wife worked him with a pony. I used to chain him up when he was through with his act, and this time I chained him and turned to walk away when he caught me in the back with both tusks and I was hurt pretty badly. So I grabbed a [pitch] fork which was near and let him have it good. After that he came in after the act and he came running, but made no more breaks. Wagner's wife made quite a fuss over it.

"I have been in many a stampede



Bates with the full grown Columbia. Circus World Museum collection.

and plenty of blowdowns. At one time we had some little elephants with the Barnum show which I have seen run away every day for a week thru the dressing rooms and thru fences. They were hitched to a small chariot and driven in harness by one man, who held four reins. I walked beside them.

"We had a stampede in a little town in New Jersey. A big storm

came up and frightened the six little elephants. It took four hours for me to get them made fast to the larger animals. Mr. Bailey had them sent back to Bridgeport for three or four weeks with Mooney, but they came back and joined the show in Detroit, Mich."

Bates retired from the elephant business in 1908 at age fifty-seven after a twenty-five year career with the Barnum show.

He then joined the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show as a side show ticket taker in 1909 and remained there through the 1913 season. The Bates *Billboard* letter said: "There was a big wreck when I was with the 101 Ranch show on the Virginian railroad on the way from some little town to Norfolk, Virginia. It was a Saturday night, so, as we had until Monday morning to get into Norfolk, we left about two o'clock in the morning and at about four the wreck occurred. We had made a fast run of eighty miles and came up on a switch to a small side track, which was locked not to throw. At the end of switch was a bank. The engine and first car passed over the switch all right. The side track only held three or four cars and so three stock cars took it. Twenty-eight or thirty horses were killed.

Bates died at age 75 on August 18, 1926 in Warwick, Rhode Island.

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Include Hoxie Brothers, Sells and Gray, King Brothers, Cole, Hagen-Wallace, Lewis Brothers, Great American and many other shows.

THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1997 CONVENTION

The plush appointments of the Sheraton North Shore in Northbrook, Illinois provided a suitable location for the 1997 convention of the Circus Historical Society. Five sessions of papers and demonstrations, a banquet with a special guest speaker, along with a visitation to the most extraordinary home in Illinois, filled the agenda from June 5 to 7. Sixty-one people registered, with the number rising slightly for the special events.

David Carlyon had the honor of leading off with a presentation on Dan Rice, chronicling three important aspects of his Civil War presence and image. Carlyon did much to debunk common, and oft-repeated misrepresentations of Rice. A chronicle of P. T. Barnum's crowning glory, his Great Roman Hippodrome of 1874, followed next, delivered by William L. Slout. The origin, character and perpetuation of the concert or after-show was the focus of Stuart Thayer's contribution. Margaret Shannon again drew lively comment with an insightful look at the Zingaro operation which attracted the circus intelligentsia in New York last year.

The next round of papers was keynoted by Richard J. Reynolds' startling revelation of an elephant birth in America in 1875, five years prior to the well known 1880 birth. An entirely new wealth of knowledge about sea lions, and pinepeds in general, was provided by Chuck Meltzer, who drew upon his own animal

Convention speakers, left to right, Chuck Meltzer, Ward Hall, Richard Reynolds and Margaret Shannon.



care experience as the basis for the presentation. Ben Davenport's usually unappreciated circus received proper credit as a training ground for many accomplished people in the show business in Ward Hall's paper, "The Terrific Teens of Dailey Bros. Circus."

Fred D. Pfening III's survey of Chicago's contributions to the genre kicked off the second day of presentations, including the observation that indoor venues played a major role in the city's show history. Stan Barker's masterful delivery on circuses in Chicago amusement parks enlightened many to the overlooked presence of circus acts and entire troupes being featured by fixed entertainment sites. The circuses and circus personnel emanating from Petersburg, Illinois were the focus of Steve Gossard's paper. One of circuses' nefarious characters, Bunk Allen, could not escape the penetrating research and presentation of Gordon Yadon, who turned a spotlight on the nether side of the circus business.

Vince Newkirk of Poster Plus led off the afternoon discussion on the preservation and conservation of posters, illustrating a remarkable talent to bring pieces back from near total loss. A *tour de force* in poster collecting was embodied in the dozens of examples which Ken Harck shared with the attendees during an all-too brief exhibition. Dean of American Magicians, Jay Marshall, then impressed the audience with his eye-defying mastery of rings and other magic props, followed by his presentation of the Blade Box, using the apparatus from Chicago's legendary Riverview Park. The gentle means by

which circuses extract additional money from customers, including high seating, were the basis of Al Stencell's entertaining commentary.

Special guest speaker Bill Griffith, owner of several Wisconsin-based circuses in the late 1950s

and early 1960s, entertained and educated the audience at the annual banquet with his "Jackpots." Griffith, Wisconsin's reigning circus impresario, also informed the group of his air calliope collecting and new carnival operation. Closure to the papers sessions came on Saturday morning with John McConnell reviewing Shrine circus operations and Fred Dahlinger speaking on the once-common association between mechanical organs and outdoor shows.

The most extraordinary event in CHS history occurred on the convention's last day when the registrants enjoyed the architectural and musical glories of the Victorian Palace in Barrington Hills. This home, the largest in Illinois, features treasures from motion picture palaces, the world's largest theatre organ and the world's greatest collection of mechanical musical instruments. Above all else, the gracious welcome and hospitality of Jasper and Marian Sanfilippo exceeded all expectations. The mechanical melodies were silenced only during the fine catered meal. An enjoyable twilight organ concert began with the one-time only appearance of an unknown organist. He readily retreated to the balcony to enjoy the company of others in hearing the computer replicate the sounds made by the world's finest theatre organists. Fred Dahlinger Jr.

1997 Board Meeting

The annual meeting of the Circus Historical Society board was convened during the Northbrook convention the evening of June 5, 1997, by president Fred Dahlinger. Present were: Richard J. Reynolds III, vice president; Dave Price, secretary-treasurer; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., director Division I; Guy Fiorenza, director Division V; Al Stencell, director Division IX; Fred D. Pfening, III, *Bandwagon* managing editor and Karen Severson, election commissioner.

The president first called on Dave Price to pass out copies of the recent audit of the books covering the 1996-1997 fiscal year. Fred Pfening, Jr., observed that we were spending \$25.37 per member/subscriber on the *Bandwagon* and with income of \$19.00 per member/subscriber. The \$19.00 amount has remained the same for a number of years. Deficits had been offset in the past by convention and auction revenue. These funds would not be available this year as the convention lost money and no auction was conducted.

Resolution in appreciation of generosity of Edith "Shrimp" Johnston

WHEREAS, the late EDITH "SHRIMP" JOHNSTON, a former and valued member of the Circus Historical Society, bequeathed to the Society a substantial sum to further the purposes for which the said Society is organized; and,

WHEREAS, the said bequest, made via Ms. Johnston's estate, constitutes the largest contribution yet made to the Society in its fifty-eight year history; and,

WHEREAS, her kindness should inspire others to contribute to the Society;

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Circus Historical Society does hereby formally express its gratitude for and appreciation of EDITH "SHRIMP" JOHNSTON's magnanimous generosity,

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the Circus Historical Society honor the memory of EDITH "SHRIMP" JOHNSTON by publishing a copy of this resolution in a forthcoming issue of the Society's journal, *Bandwagon*.

Adopted by the Circus Historical Society at its general membership meeting held at Northbrook, Illinois on June 6, 1997.

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A discussion followed concerning increased *Bandwagon* postage and printing costs. Fred Pfening, III, pointed out that the quality of the magazine was better than ever before and the number of pages per issue had doubled. Fred Pfening, Jr., noted that in the past the circulation was around 1,400 it has dropped to around 1,300. The print order per issue has been reduced to 1,600, with extra copies held for back issue sale. He noted that late payers receive back issues they missed and mailing these costs more than the Periodical rate on regular mailings.

All present agreed that it would be necessary to: (1) increase dues to cover costs and (2) address declining membership with an aggressive campaign. In regard to the matter of higher dues Stencell said that we should not ask too little for our product, as he had seen some circuses do. Fiorenza commented that he felt the membership would understand the need for an increase if we stated the reason. Reynolds pointed out that some members might want the increasing costs to be covered by our recent donation but he believed it was vital that these and future contributions be invested with only the interest being used for operating costs.

Dahlinger called for a motion to

increase the dues/subscription to \$25.00 with \$2.00 extra for processing new members and \$5.00 added to either amount for out-of-country members/subscribers. Fiorenza seconded the motion, carried by a 6 to 2 vote, the two voting against favoring a higher increase.

Dahlinger then addressed the question of a membership campaign. Pfening, III, volunteered to produce a brochure as had been used in the past but with color and different illustrations. Division directors will be asked to assist in distributing them within their divisions. Pfening, III, also volunteered to look into the setting up of a CHS Internet

web site.

The president then questioned whether present divisions are appropriate. Based on current membership number some divisions are very large, others quite small. The secretary pointed out that moving New York from Division III to Division II would make the eastern divisions nearly equal but that the western divisions were smaller in number of members but bigger in area. Pfening, III proposed that the matter of divisions be held for a future discussion.

Pfening, Jr. suggested that perhaps directors should be elected at large. Reynolds suggested that for legal reasons, our board should consist of "trustees" with specified responsibilities, rather than the somewhat vague assignments that now go with a directorship. Dahlinger spoke in favor of a nine member board consisting of the president, vice president, immediate past-president, editor, secretary-treasurer, and four at-large trustees.

Dahlinger then asked Reynolds to report on our progress with re-

incorporation and IRS status. Reynolds stated that our old Wisconsin corporation had lapsed some years back and that the Society should be incorporated for number of reasons, not the least of which being that recent donations make it feasible that we apply to IRS for non-profit charitable status. He recommended re-incorporation in Ohio, since the *Bandwagon* office is located there, and he reported that Pfening, Jr. had employed an Ohio attorney/CPA to work with us on incorporating and seeking IRS authorization for not for profit status.

Reynolds, an attorney himself, will be consulting regarding the purposes and peculiarities of our organization. He pointed out that our ancient by-laws need to be up-dated prior to making application to the IRS.

Dahlinger then appointed Karen Severson election commissioner and called for nominations for the coming year. Richard Reynolds was nominated for president, Al Stencell for vice-president, and Dave Price for secretary-treasurer; others may be nominated by the membership prior to the election in December.

Dahlinger asked Reynolds to draw up a resolution in appreciation of the generosity of Edith "Shrimp" Johnston for leaving the Society a sizable sum at her death. Price announced that Bob Tomer of Gloucester, Massachusetts, died February 11, 1997 and that his widow had asked in his obituary that gifts be made to the CHS. This resulted in a number of contributions from friends and from Tomer's high school class. Additionally Marilyn Parkinson, the widow of Bob Parkinson, had made a generous donation to the CHS in Bob's name.

The meeting was then adjourned. Submitted by Dave Price, secretary.

Convention speakers, left to right, Stuart Thayer, David Carlyon and William Slout.



1897

J. M. Barry's Great American Circus opened the season of 1897 in its winter quarter's town of Carbondale, Kansas. The opening was announced in a story in the *Carbondalian* May 22. "The Great American Shows will open next Thursday night [May 27] and will show again on Friday night and Saturday afternoon and evening. Mr. Berry (sic) has fitted the show up in first-class style.

He has new tents throughout, and we have the assurance that the show will be one of the neatest and best wagon shows that will be on the road this season. His circus company will be large, and has been selected with greatest possible care as to qualifications--only employing the very best artists to be procured and he guarantees (sic) to please his patrons, by giving a performance second to no show on the road. Mr. Berry has contracted with Prof. V. P. Cody, a cousin of the famous 'Buffalo Bill,' who is an expert trick rider, a champion glass ball shot, both with gun or pistol. Mr. Cody comes with the very best of references, as one of the most expert men in his line. He will give a free exhibition on the show grounds just after the parade, which will be a novelty in the line of outside performances. The admission to the show, on account of it being the opening and giving four performances, will be placed at 10c. The performance will be clean, interesting and instructive--a place where you can take your family with propriety.

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING THE GREATEST GLORY OF THE GOLDEN AGE

Vol. V Chapter 2. Part 3
By Orin Copple King

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Orin Copple King

"Owing to the rain the Great American Shows did not show yesterday [May 28] and the day before as billed," the *Carondalian* reported. "They will, however, give our citizens their full program today [Saturday, May 29]."

The June 5 newspaper reported that, "The Great American Shows gave their exhibition as advertised here last Saturday afternoon and night to full tents. The shows, as Mr. Barry claimed for it, is exceptionally good, and our people were well pleased. The entertainment is clean and interesting, well worth the price of admission. The performance is as good as given by many shows three times its size."

How the show got out of Kansas is a mystery. No dates following the opening can be found.

The *New York Clipper*, August 28, carried a report on the show.

The Campbell Bros. United Shows in 1897. Pfening Archives.

"NOTES FROM GREAT AMERICAN SHOWS.--J. M. Barry, manager; Mrs. Frankie Kirkpatrick, treasurer; Sadie Barry, secretary; Fred Kirkpatrick, leader of the band; C. A. Clark, advance agent. We are now in our twelfth week and still play to big houses in the Black Hills of South Dakota. We have a 70 ft. Top, 40 ft. middle piece, twenty wagons, sixty horses and the following people for the season: The

Vernon Bros. Aerialists; Eugene Falk, high wire ascensions; Ben Vernon, balloonist; Vick Cody, rifle shooting and impalement act, with Jas. LaFlode, assistant in wild West acts; Jesse Flim (sic), living rings; Frankie Barry troop of dogs; Jas. Swetnam, singing and knock about clown; Jake Thompson, tandem riding act, and Mrs. Bowman, trained canines. Prof. S. P. Bowman has the side show, a 50ft round top, with various curiosities. Dick Allen is canvas boss; N. C. Thompson, hostler; Ed Baker has concert and reserved seat privilege. We are now touring South."

Mrs. Frankie Kirkpatrick and Sadie Barry were daughters of J. M. Barry. Frankie was married to the band leader.

The September 4 *Carbondalian* published a brief story picked up from the *Deadwood, South Dakota Pioneer Times*; "The Great American Shows, or Barry's circus, which closed a two days engagement in this city last evening is a good show and merited the very liberal patronage it received. They do not carry as many



eople as some of the more pretentious shows, but every act is first class. The two troupes of trained dogs are as good as can be found anywhere, the slack wire and trapeze acts cannot be excelled, while Victor F. Cody is a whole show within himself. His rifle and pistol shooting is better than that of his cousin, Wm. F. Cody. He is the roughest of rough riders and does dire and danger (sic) acts truly wonderful. The Pioneer-Times commends the shows to amusements loving people everywhere."

Sometime during the season Ed Kleopfer replaced Fred Kirkpatrick as band leader.

The Great American closed the season at Cozad, Nebraska, October 1, according to the New York *Clipper*.

The October 16 *Carbondalian* reported that, "The Great American Shows arrived home this week. Uncle Dad Berry (sic) the genial owner and manager informs us that he has had a very successful season and is well satisfied with his summer work. The show spent most of the season in Northern Nebraska and South Dakota. He says that he will be able to put out a better show than ever next spring. We are glad to welcome him back."

J. M. Barry, who never made it to the big time and did not amass a fabulous fortune, was a showman about whom there was never any scandal. His wealth and his reward was his reputation.

The Oskaloosa *Independent*, June 18, 1897, ran a two-column advertisement announcing the coming on June 22, of, "The Greatest and Best Show! CAMPBELL BROS.' UNITED SHOWS! A Magnificent Amusement Federation. A Mammoth, Towering Above Other Shows Like a Mighty Colossus. Balloon Ascension, PROF. RUSH Will ascend to the clouds in the Largest Balloon Ever Constructed and when at a height of 6,000 feet will jump from his balloon and descend to the earth in his Miniature Parachute. The only Tented Exhibition that depends on its Merits Alone, and does not go to the graves of past great men to borrow a name. Wonderful Educated Horses, Funny Clown, Mules, Performing Hogs, Monkeys, Dogs and Cats; the Boxing Bear, etc., etc. Greatest Leapers, Tumblers, Acrobats, Contortionists, Most Grace



Lee Greer Campbell, in street clothes, turned a double somersault over an elephant in the 1897 big show. Pfening Archives.

ful Riders, & c. Come to town early and see the FREE STREET PARADE! At 10 o'clock. Fine Bands, Beautiful Chariots, Dens, Cages, Tableau Wagons, Funny Clown Carts and Grand Free Horse Fair. NO GAMES allowed on the grounds, and NO FAKIRS allowed to follow the show. Two performances a day at 2 and 8 o'clock. Doors open one hour earlier. One ticket admits to the whole show. Admission, Adults 20 cts; Children, 10c. come and bring the children and see a way-up good show."

The ad carried no date, nor did it mention Oskaloosa.

"The balloon ascension at Campbell Bros.' Circus Tuesday evening wasn't very much of an 'ascension,' according to the Independent, the balloon bursting just as it started up and letting the hot air escape so that it did not mount over probably 200 feet. It came slowly down a couple of hundred yards away, the man getting his parachute opened so he came down lightly, without injury. The expectant crowd were disappointed because of the failure. The showmen ought to have patched the old balloon better. It is said the show was well patronized, the tent being full at night, and that the performance was good."

A few Oskaloosa men were hired by the circus. Tom Crawford, Bert Nickum, Ray Bower, Will Meredith and Bert Fairchild left town with the show.

Campbell Brothers billed Washington for exhibitions on July 10.

The Washington *Post-Register* noted that, "The balloon ascension and parachute leap at Campbell Bros. Show was witnessed by nearly all

our people. It was a beautiful sight, the night being perfect."

The *Post-Register* reported that, "Campbell Bros. Show was well attended considering that nearly all the bridges were out, preventing the country people from attending. Campbell Bros. formerly lived north of Haddam and organized their show in this county. Hence all of our people are interested in the show, and are glad to note that the boys are making rapid progress, now having

as good performers as any large circus on the road. The boys are young in life and we bespeak for them, should their lease of life be the usual time allotted man, a wonderful career in their business. Success to you boys and come again."

And, in another column, "During the performances at Campbell Bros. show Saturday, one entire section of seats, having about 350 people seated on it, fell to the ground. The entire section went down together, but happily no one was hurt. Joe Brown sustained the only injuries of any consequence. The section was crowded with people, and excitement was high until all the people got out safely. The wet, soggy, condition of the ground caused the mishap. No blame is attached to Campbell Bros. for the accident."

The Ellinwood *Advocate* was surprised by Campbell Brothers' exhibition of September 27. "Campbell Bros.' Circus, which showed here Monday, was, to say the least, beyond expectation. While their equipment was not of the best, yet their men were all good performers and deserve a better chance to prove their ability. The show was well attended, considering the size of the town and every one felt it was well worth the price of admission."

Kingman, as a circus town, was generally not attractive to showmen, but the *Leader-Courier* informed its readers of an unusual occurrence. "Kingman is to have two circus, Campbell Bros., the first one to be here, is billed for next Saturday [October 2], the 2nd one, Lemen Brothers, will be here a week later. Campbell Bros. Advertise a free balloon ascension."

Following show day the *Leader-Courier* printed the following: "A larger crowd than was expected came to town last Saturday and Campbell

Bros' show had a good attendance. The exhibition was fairly good and worth the price of admission. On account of the wind that prevailed in the afternoon the balloon ascension was postponed until between six and seven o'clock, when it did take place, much to the surprise of our people, who, from past experiences, had about come to the conclusion that a balloon ascension was one of the things that was destined never to happen in Kingman. There was no wind at all at that time and the ascension was made without difficulty. It took place on the hill in the north part of town and was witnessed by a large crowd. Many who would have liked to witnessed the event missed it because they were skeptical and remained at home."

Other dates were undoubtedly played in 1897, but the four towns listed here are the only ones to be discovered to date.

The Ft. Scott *Daily Monitor*, May 23, 1897, carried a short two-column advertisement for Harrison & Pickett's World's Greatest Dog and Pony Show. Beneath a cut of five horses walking on their hind legs the ad claimed, "It's a show for the masses. Without an Objectionable Feature. The finest & most intelligent ponies. The Best Trained Dogs. Children Will Receive the Greatest of Comfort and Care. A novel street parade watch for it. ADMISSION Children-10cts. Adults-15cts."

Missing from the ad was the date of the exhibitions. A handout on a different page supplied some information.

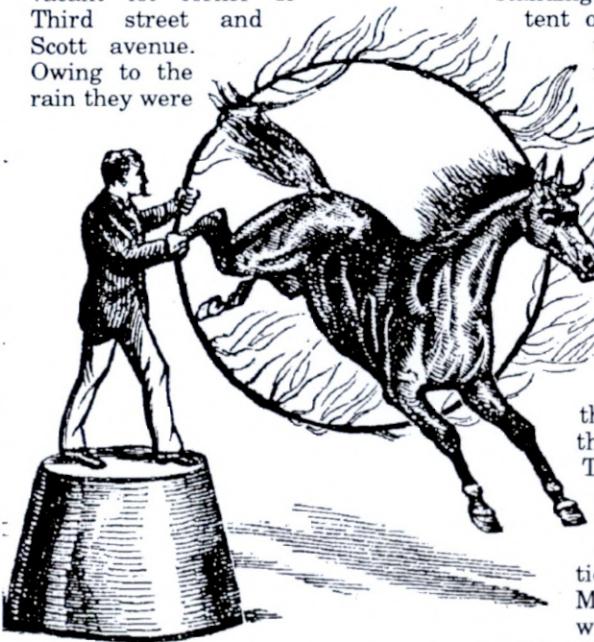
"A novel and pleasing entertainment by nearly seventy star performers, every one of them a pet of the ladies and little ones. Ponies, dogs, monkeys and donkeys, in a hundred acts and evolutions of a startling and intricate nature. Understanding and obeying with marvelous intelligence, the commands as they are spoken by Prof. Harrison, who has spent years in educating them to the highest point of animal sagacity. Tent located corner Second and Scott avenue. Monday and Tuesday. Children 10 cents, adults 20 cents."

The advertisement gave the admission for adults at 15 cents. The handout, 20 cents. The Monday date was August 24. Monday was blown.

"Owing to an accident to one of Harrison & Pickett's cars which has caused the delay of their arrival here, but which has been happily repaired, the show will be in this city

Tuesday and Wednesday, May 25th and 26th. Grand street parade at 12 sharp. So come and bring your little ones and enjoy a good time. Matinee Wednesday 2 p. M. Admission 10 and 20 cents."

Following the evening performance of May 25, the *Monitor* reported that, "Notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather the opening performance of the pony and dog show was witnessed by a fair sized audience, composed of men, women and children. The attraction is a great drawing card, not only for children, but for grown people. The aggregation arrived yesterday afternoon during the storm, and raised their tent on the vacant lot corner of Third street and Scott avenue. Owing to the rain they were



handicapped in erecting the tent and no performance was given in the afternoon.

"The ponies and dogs were pretty, and their performing denoted careful and proper training. There were clown dogs and clown ponies, bright dogs and bright ponies and with this combination the audience was most pleasantly entertained for three consecutive hours. The animals are the best trained that has ever appeared before a Fort Scott audience. They accomplished every act with apparent grace and ease.

"The performance will be repeated this afternoon and again in the evening, and the attendance will no doubt be vast."

The last exhibition, Wednesday evening, ended in murder.

"Last night at 9:30 on the show grounds, corner of Scott avenue and Third street," according to the *Monitor*, "Herman Royster, a 17 year old

colored boy received a blow on the head with a heavy club at the hands of Bob Christian, one of the roustabouts with the Harrison & Pickett dog and pony show, which will result in his death. The blow was struck with malice of forethought and the victim now lies in a room at the calaboose, suffering untold agony. After the crime was committed the fellow fled to the dressing room, donned another canvasman's coat and escaped. At 3 o'clock this morning he was still a fugitive.

"The deed was committed without the slightest cause or provocation. Royster and a white boy, whose name could not be learned, were standing on the south side of the tent outside of the guide ropes talking and cutting up, as mischievous boys will.

Three small white boys, George Button, Frank Hoover and Fred Hoffman, came up and in a teasing manner said; 'There he goes, catch him!'

"Christian, the canvasman, then approached them and without a word, struck Royster a fierce blow on the right side of the head, that will cause his death. The skull was fractured and caused concussion of the brain. The only person who could give a clear explanation of the affair was Will Marks, a colored man who was standing near by. After striking Royster, not being satisfied with what he had already done, he reeled around and struck Royster's companion but beyond raising a large bump on the head, he was not hurt.

"Royster did not fall when he received the blow, but walked away. Marks inquired if he was hurt, whereupon he replied; 'No, but it knocked me crazy.' Those were the last words that passed his lips. Walking to the middle of Scott avenue he fell unconscious to the ground and began vomiting, which indicated concussion of the brain. He was carried back to the lot and Dr. Carver was sent for and the police notified. After examining him, the doctor ordered him removed and he was placed in a hack and taken to the calaboose. In the meantime Dr. Rucker, the city physician, was notified and a more thorough examination was made. The skin of the head was not broken. It was at once pronounced a concus-

sion of the brain, his skull being fractured.

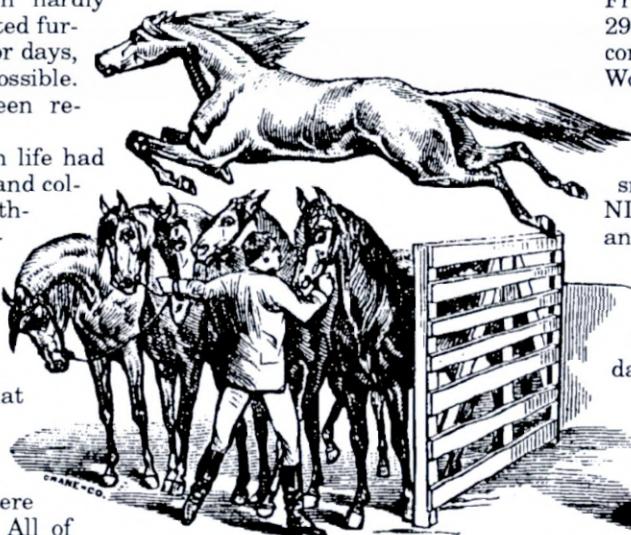
"The skull was trepanned and the pressure removed from the brain. It had caused hemorrhage of the brain and nearly a pint of clotted blood was taken off the brain. Dr. Rucker says it is one of those cases from which one hardly ever recovers. The jar from the blow ruptured the cerebral blood vessel, which hardly ever occurs. The doctor stated further that he might linger for days, but his recovery is impossible. Consciousness has not been restored.

"The news that a human life had been taken spread rapidly and colored people by the score gathered at the scene and wanted the fellow caught and lynched. As soon as the officers learned of the trouble they started in search of Christian, but being unable to learn in what direction he went they were powerless. The company's cars at the Missouri Pacific depot were searched, but to no avail. All of the out-going trains are being closely watched. Thinking that probably some of the showmen knew where he went, the colored people wanted all the members arrested and held unless they furnished the officers some information. Accordingly warrants were issued. County Attorney Sheppard attempted to secure a statement from the whole organization as to Christian's whereabouts, but each in turn denied knowing anything about him. Officer Gardner and William Marks, the colored man who saw the blow struck, claims to have overheard a conversation between the canvasmen in which it was learned that Christian was to meet them at a certain point. All of them denied this.

"Wm. Davis, the boss canvasman, was the last man who claims to have seen the would-be assassin. After the trouble he says Christian came in the dressing room and said he had a fight. Davis told him to go down to the car and help load. He then put on Davis' coat and left. Davis claims to have known nothing about the affair until after he sent him to the car. The watchman at the car said Christian did not come there.

"Failing to draw any information from the members of the show, after repeated efforts, County Attorney Sheppard ordered the arrest of the whole company and Constable Ed

Feist served the warrants. Messrs. Harrison and Pickett, proprietors of the show, pleaded that they should not be locked up and offered to pay for guards. However, sixteen of the men, principally roustabouts, were locked up and the remainder were guarded in the car in charge of Constable Ed Feist.



"Messrs. Harrison and Pickett say Christian was employed at Marshall two weeks ago. Wm. Davis, the boss canvasman, informs the officers that he thinks his home is near Coffeyville. He is about 5 feet 8, weighs about 150 pounds and is smooth shaven.

"The managers of the show offered every inducement and unhesitatingly gave all the information in their power to keep from being arrested, but to no avail, and they will evidently not give a performance at Iola today, where they were booked to appear.

"The show was a day late in arriving here and will be a day late in departing. County Attorney Sheppard gave no reason why he took such measures. Messrs. Harrison and Pickett will take steps today to secure their release."

"On June 1 the *Monitor* reported, "Last night at 9 o'clock when occurred the death of Herman Ralston (sic), the colored boy who was struck on the head last Wednesday night by Bob Christian, a canvasman with Harrison & Pickett's dog and pony show, another murder was added to Fort Scott's long list and the whereabouts of the assassin will probably forever remain a profound secret to the authorities of the city, although letters have been sent all over the country giving his description.

"Death came without a murmur or

a struggle, he never regaining consciousness from the time the fatal blow was struck. At the time the boy's wound was examined the doctors pronounced it fatal and his death was only a matter of a few short days. He died upon the couch he was laid on at the calaboose six nights ago."

Harrison & Pickett played Ottawa Friday and Saturday, May 28 and 29. A one-column ad announced the coming. "HARRISON & PICKETT'S Wonderful Exhibition of Educated

PONIES AND DOGS. Ottawa, Kans., FRIDAY and SATURDAY May 28-29. RUTH the smallest pony in America. 20 PONIES 40 DOGS. Clown Dogs, Ponies and Monkeys in a refined entertainment. It is an object lesson in a liberal education. Endorsed by press and pulpit everywhere. Watch for the street parade Friday afternoon.

"Tent located on north Main street, near Dobson's mill. ADMISSION: Children 10c, Adults 20c. First performance Friday evening at 8 o'clock. Saturday matinee and night."

The last known Kansas date was Iola, Thursday, June 3.

The Iola *Register* reported, "There was a big crowd at the Pony and Dog show last Thursday night, and it was well entertained. The dogs were no great shakes, but the ponies were the best trained horses ever seen here. Diamond Dick [?] wanted to buy the whole outfit and keep it here, but the owner thought he has too good a thing."

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video Inc. Topeka, Kansas

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Pick 6 for \$63.00 - get three more tapes free.

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- 2). "CIRCUS TIME" - DECCA
- 3). "RBB&B CIRCUS BAND" - CAPITOL
- 4). "MUSIC FROM THE BIG TOP" - EVEREST
- 5). "CIRCUS SPECTACULAR" - LONDON
- 6). "MERLE & R/B BAND" - RCA 1931
- 7). "MERLE & R/B BAND" - COLUMBIA 1941
- 8). "SINGING RINGMASTER" - HAROLD RONK
- 9). BEATTY-COLE CIRCUS: '65/'69 or 1978
- 10). MILLS BROS. CIRCUS: '55/'60/'62/'63 or 1966
- 11). KING BROS. CIRCUS: '71/'73 or 1974
- 12). CARSON & BARNES: '73/'74/'78/'79/'80/'83 or 1987
- 13). CIRCUS VARGAS: '76/'77 or 1978
- 14). HOXIE BROS. CIRCUS: 1975 or 1982
- 15). SELLS & GRAY CIRCUS: 1972 or 1974
- 16). MERLE EVANS LIVE CONCERT DATE - 1968
- 17). "A NOSTALGIC TRIO" - King/McKennon/Castle
- 18). "MUSIC FROM GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH"
- 19). "1943 FITCH BANDWAGON" - Merle & RB Band
- 20). R/B CIRCUS WORLD - SHOW PERFORMANCES
- 21). CIRCUS & CARNIVAL SIDE SHOW BALLYS
- 22). ROYAL AMERICAN CAROUSEL BAND ORGAN

Special sale prices valid ONLY until September 30, 1997

Please excuse the delays in shipping orders over the last months. Unfortunately my wife is ill and therefore my work load has increased. But, I have recently caught up all my orders and from now on will try to have them shipped as quickly as possible.
Thank you for your patience and understanding,



All orders in the Continental U.S. & Canada Postpaid. France add \$20.00, Europe & the rest of the world please add \$15.00 per order. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

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Mike Martin

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